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“The rupture generation” : nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals in Mexico City, 1774-1882

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Chapter 2

Methodology: On the Analysis of Primary Sources

Introduction

In terms of the methodology of this dissertation, I propose to study a variety of primary sources produce by early nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals. For the purpose of this work, I will review an important number of primary sources, such as letters, essays, pamphlets and official documents that need to be interpreted in order to understand the interests and motivations that these indigenous intellectuals had at the time they produced this material. The method offered by the principles of hermeneutics seems appropriate to understand both the meaning and importance of the works produced by Nahua peoples during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Hermeneutics refers to the discipline that focuses on the study of texts, written or graphic ones. This methodology also considers the position or context in which the authors of these works lived and the values in order to understand their motivations, fears and interests.

In order to begin this study, methodologically speaking it is necessary to establish the basic guidelines to be used to analyze the primary sources as well as the definition of concepts, which represents one of the initial steps in the process of historical investigation. The use of clearly defined terminology is necessary in order to limit the scope of this present study and will aid in understanding the topic and the elements analyzed in this research project. It is of vital importance to define, at the outset, a series of terms that will be consistently used throughout this study. Among those terms there is the word "*indio*," the concepts "Indigenous Peoples," "Nahua people," "indigenous intellectuals," "generation units," and "ethnic bonds." By both clarifying and adopting certain definitions for these terms this study will contribute to the understanding of the social complexity of these peoples' works as well as their perspectives about certain issues that concerned them directly.

Also in order to understand the concept of a "generation" as a social cohort it will be vital to understand both the temporal breaks and delimitations of this work. In this sense, in this study I will follow the guidelines proposed by Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) about the understanding of generations as a social construction, rather than a concept referring to people related to a direct line of descent or kinship. Under Mannheim's arguments this study will consider that a generation refers to a group of individuals who experienced similar social events that determined either their collective identity or the way in which they interpreted their social circumstances. Thus, the brief definition of terms included in this section will begin the process of the research analysis of this study.

2.1 On the Analysis of Primary Sources

The general purpose of this study is to utilize the extant sources written by these nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals in order to better understand their interests and actions, both individually and collective, by attempting to interpret their own voices. However, these texts will require a historical and contextual interpretation that avoids the use of opposing dichotomous terms, such as “objects” and “subjects,” since this position praises the existence of two separate and often unequal parts in the analysis of historical material: that is active and passive agents.⁶⁸ This study will take this position because I consider that dichotomous approaches reduce the possibility of understanding historical material from a less biased position. With the purpose of leaving behind these considerations, the approach to these sources will be based on the principles of hermeneutics.⁶⁹ A hermeneutical analysis is generally considered as the series of theoretical practices that collaborate in the interpretation of texts, by also taking into account the existence of texts that are more than words and sentences.⁷⁰ The brief definition provided by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) about hermeneutics and its purpose as a methodology contributes to guide the process of research that is the purpose of this study:

Let us call the totality of learning and skills that enable one to make the signs speak and to discover their meaning, hermeneutics; let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the signs, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology [...] To search for a meaning is to bring to light a resemblance. To search for the law governing sign is to discover the things that are alike. The grammar of beings is an exegesis of these things. And what the language they speak has to tell us is quite simply that the syntax is that which binds them together. The nature of things, their coexistence, the way in which they are linked together and communicate is nothing other than resemblance.⁷¹

Added to this is the consideration that true objectivity in historical studies is not possible to achieve, but the guidelines of hermeneutics contribute to the approaching of primary sources from a perspective in which the validity of interpretations is regulated by intermediate and inclusive ways of interpretation.⁷² This statement makes sense if we acknowledge that the author of any text from the past had a specific intention or intentions in writing that document, and the

⁶⁸ See Maarten Jansen, “Postcolonial Hermeneutics,” in *The Mixtec Pictorial Manuscript. Time, Agency and Memory in Ancient Mexico*, ed. Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 181-216.

⁶⁹ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 3-73.

⁷⁰ Mauricio Beuchot, *Tratado de hermenéutica analógica. Hacia un nuevo modelo de interpretación* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 13.

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1994), 29.

⁷² Beuchot, *Tratado de hermenéutica analógica*, 8.

purpose of the historian is to come to know these intentions in more depth. However, it is important to also take into consideration that according to the guidelines provided by hermeneutics on the interpretation of any document from the past, the historical document out of its authors' context and time period no longer expresses what the author originally intended. So, any historical document goes much further than the author's intention when that document is met with our own context and intensions in our conducting of an historical analysis of that source.⁷³ Consequently, the interpretation that we can provide for this text is therefore different from the intention that the author originally had when he created that document. Thus, since our own interpretations and historical context have been influenced by our motivations, we cannot know for sure, but can only approximate, the original intensions of the document's author.

From this perspective, the methodological interpretation offered by the field of analogical hermeneutics requires us to consider both the document, the author, and who it is that interprets the text in equal terms.⁷⁴ However, this methodological precept also obligates the person who is in charge of interpreting the text to necessarily contextualize, in depth, the author of the texts and the document. The historian must also have examined for the probable intentions and interests of the supposed receptor of the message expressed in the said document or text in order to reduce the possibilities of misinterpretation and miscontextualization.⁷⁵ In the practice of interpreting historical texts any relativism⁷⁶ must be avoided by a methodological and careful contextualization of the text and the context of the author in order understand the message contained in the document, reducing the possibility of wrongly interpreting it.⁷⁷ This careful contextualization is conducted by verifying the hints and the code in which the text or document was produced. Nevertheless, there should be coherency between the author of the text and the context, and *vice versa*.⁷⁸ Consequently, Mauricio Beuchot defined this type of exercise of analogical hermeneutics as follows:

¿Qué es interpretar analógicamente o basados en la analogía, o utilizándola? Es interpretar un texto buscando la coherencia interna, una coherencia proporcional (sintaxis) entre sus elementos constitutivos. La analogía misma es orden, o el orden es analógico. Y la sintaxis es orden, coordinación. Pero la analogía no es un orden unívoco; tampoco es un es orden equívoco. Es un sentido analógico. – También es interpretar buscando la relación proporcional del texto con los objetos o hechos que designa (semántica). Es la correspondencia o adecuación entre el texto y el mundo que designa. Mundo, aquí, no necesariamente es realidad, sino

⁷³ Ibid., 24

⁷⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Alberto Carrillo Canán, coord., *Hermenéutica, analogía y diálogo intercultural* (México: Consejo Nacional para las Artes, la Ciencia y la Tecnología-Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1999), 13.

⁷⁷ Beuchot, *Tratado de hermenéutica analógica*, 27.

⁷⁸ Umberto Eco, *Los límites de la interpretación*; trad. Elena Lozano (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1992), 100-102.

que puede ser un mundo posible. Es una referencia analógica, no unívoca, pero tampoco una irreferencialidad equívoca.- También es interpretar buscando proporcionalmente el uso del autor, su intencionalidad expresiva y comunicativa (pragmática). La lectura del intérprete debe ser proporcional- no unívoca, pero tampoco equívoca- a la escritura del autor.⁷⁹

In this sense, analogical hermeneutics advocates for creating a dialogue between the text, the author and its context, the audience to which the text was directed, and the person who interprets the text out of its original context. In this dialogue, the one who interprets the text must recognize the cultural, contextual and historical differences that exist between the author of the texts and the one who interprets it outside of its temporal and historical context. However, the one who interprets a historical text or document is also obligated to recognize the historical and contextual similarities that prevail between the author and the one who interprets the text.⁸⁰ In this sense, the dichotomy of subjects and objects is suppressed in order to create a series of elements in common that contribute to a better understanding of the text and the author in their own context.⁸¹

In this sense, I consider that the perspective of analogical hermeneutics offers a valid methodology that is based on the recognition of diversity in its vast representations, but its use also enables us to avoid relativism in the interpretation of documents. Relativism, as Beuchot explained, could possibly lead the historian to affirm that *all* interpretations made on a text are correct and possible, or to erroneously state that *any* interpretations made on a text are correct.⁸² While this position recognizes the whole range of possibilities of interpretation between those that can be considered as accurate and others as inaccurate, analogical hermeneutics invites the historian, or the interpreter of the text, to find an intermediate place in which both contexts, the one that belongs to the author and the one in which the interpreter of the text live, could have a reciprocal dialogue. Consequently, this study will consider the inclusive characteristic of these theoretical interpretations and terms as a valid perspective for both approaching the content of the sources that will be reviewed and their interpretation.

2.2 Contextualizing the Terms “Indigenous” and “Indio”

Throughout the development of this current study, I consider it important to analyze the nature and meaning of some of the terms that will be constantly used throughout this work. The most recurrent and important words that I will include in this study are the terms “indigenous,” “Indian,” and “indio.” Due to the nature of these words’ meanings, significance and their

⁷⁹ Mauricio Beuchot, “Breve exposición de la hermenéutica analógica,” *Revista Teología* XLV, número 97 (diciembre 2008): 491-502; 492-493.

⁸⁰ Ascensión Hernández de León Portilla, comp., *Hermenéutica analógica. La analogía en la antropología y la historia* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Itaca, 2009), 211.

⁸¹ Pierre Guiraud, *La Semiología*, trans., María Teresa Poyrazian (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1972), 31.

⁸² Beuchot, *Tratado de hermenéutica analógica*, 12.

political implications it is indispensable to explain the interpretation and the way in which I intend to use these terms in this study.

It is well known that the Europeans extensively used the word “*indio*,” the English term for “Indian,” as the result of misleading cultural presumptions that Europeans had developed during the early stages of the Age of Exploration. Later on, when the Spaniards began the process of exploration with the clear objective of conquering American territory, the term “*indios*” developed and gained cultural connotations based on Spanish experiences during the initial contact period of their expansion in the Caribbean.⁸³

In the early sixteenth century, when Hernando Cortés arrived for the first time on the coast of the modern state of Veracruz, in Mexico, the cultural connotations associated with the word “*indio*” already referred to a colonialist semantic. The pejorative meaning that the Spaniards intended with the term “*indio*” collaborated with the psychological warfare that Spaniards engaged in against the original people from a region of the Americas. The widespread and collective use of this term by Spaniards to describe indiscriminately all Indigenous Peoples together en mass, achieved the effective erasing of the diverse collective identities and the cultural differences that existed among Mesoamerican people.⁸⁴ As the modern scholar Ana Zavala mentioned:

El concepto de indio durante los primeros años de contacto estuvo determinado por la imagen que el europeo difundió de los naturales para justificar su presencia en tierras americanas y la dominación de sus habitantes. De esta manera, se minimizaron las diferencias culturales entre los indios, se trató de imponerles valores ajenos a su cultura, tales como la religión y la educación, para adaptarlos al marco jurídico hispano.⁸⁵

In this sense, the term “*indio*” not only ignored on purpose the ethnic and historical differences that prevailed among the inhabitants of the Americas prior the arrival of the Europeans, but this term also sought to serve as a means of cultural, historical and ethnic appropriation implemented by the Spaniards during the years that the conquest lasted in some regions of the Americas. Similarly, the term “*indio*” emerged from the idea that the territories located to the east, south or west of the region of India lacked a Christian ruler. This statement also implied a sense of superiority that prevailed among the inhabitants of the Christian world, which also justified the discourse of subjugation that existed within the Castilian Crown and its divine duty of Christianize the conquered territories.

⁸³ See Alicia Barabas, “La construcción del indio como bárbaro; de la etnografía al indigenismo,” *Revista Alteridades* 10, número 19 (2000): 9-20.

⁸⁴ Paul Kirchhoff, “Mesoamérica, sus límites geográficos, composición étnica y caracteres culturales” *Suplemento de la Revista Tlatoani*, Número 3 (1960): 13.

⁸⁵ Ana Luz Ramírez Zavala, “Indio/indígena, 1750-1850,” *Historia Mexicana* LX, Núm. 3 (enero-marzo, 2011): 1643-1681; 1643-1644.

Thereby, once the colonial system was established in the Americas with the political and territorial creation of the entity of the New Spain, the term “*indio*” became not only a word to refer indistinctly to the original people from the Americas, but it also turned into a juridical term to define a legal status.⁸⁶ The definition of the nature of the people from the Americas, as well as their own history within a Western and Catholic historical model of interpretation, took several years for both statesman and members of the clergy, as well as jurists, to develop the corpus of Hispanic laws.⁸⁷ Consequently, the Royal Decree of June 20 of 1500 issued by the Queen Isabella of Castile stipulated one of the first legal statuses for the Indigenous Peoples from the Americas naming them as subjects of the Spanish crown and freeing them from slavery.⁸⁸

Thus, the use of the term “*indio*” stopped being simply a cultural reference, but rather it also came to encompass a juridical concept that was well defined by the Spanish Crown in its jurisprudence and put into practice by the colonial authorities in the New Spain. Under this new term, the original people from the Americas started to be organized, taxed, selected, classified and differentiated from the rest of the population by constantly remarking upon their subjugated position.

The widespread use of the term “*indio*” in the territories that were conquered by the Spaniards, as well as the coinage and definition of the term within the limits of colonial law, represented one of the peaks in the process of the Spanish colonization of the Americas. This colonial achievement erased the collective identities and cultural diversity that existed among the original groups who inhabited Mesoamerica, making of the definition of the term “*indio*” as a word imbued with a negative connotation that affected the collective identity of Indigenous Peoples.⁸⁹

In the colony of New Spain, the application of the term “*indio*” and its internal hierarchies (*indio cacique*, *indio noble*, *indio común*, *indio gentil*, *indio salvaje*, etc.) dictated the ultimate fate of Indigenous Peoples in the colony.⁹⁰ Being an “*indio*” determined the way in which indigenous individuals were treated by the colonial authorities, from the administration of justice, to the limitation of access to education, or the regulations for Indigenous Peoples’ access

⁸⁶ Beatriz Fernández Herrero, “El mito del buen salvaje y su repercusión en el gobierno de Indias,” *Revista Agora*, número 8 (1989): 145-150.

⁸⁷ For more about the process that the American territories experienced in order to be incorporated into the new Hispanic legal system, see Antonio Dougnac Rodríguez, *Manual de Historia del Derecho Indiano* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 1994), 24-54.

⁸⁸ The status of slavery only applied to Indigenous Peoples who committed anthropophagy, or to those who were considered as prisoners of war, or if the individuals were enslaved by other Indigenous People previous arrival of the Spaniards. For more about this discussion see Rafael Sánchez Domingo, “Las Leyes de Burgos de 1512 y la doctrina jurídica de la conquista,” *Revista Jurídica de León y Castilla*, número 28 (Septiembre, 2012): 1-55.

⁸⁹ William F. Connell, *After Moctezuma: Indigenous Politics and Self-Government in Mexico City, 1524-1730* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 122.

⁹⁰ Agustina Yadira Martínez e Yvette Santamaría-Benz, “La manipulación del discurso en relación al concepto del bárbaro en los indios,” *Revista Venezolana de Sociología y Antropología* 14, número 41(septiembre, 2004): 561-579.

to positions within both the civil and religious institutions. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the term “*indio*” was also a term utilized in the hierarchical caste system implemented during the colonial period, which existed for almost the entire period of time that the Spanish colonial establishment ruled in Mexico.

The term “*indio*” had clear connotations of subjection to colonial power which held negative effects over the indigenous populations from the Americas. Nevertheless, this term also in its use as a legal entity not only defined the character of individuals, but also their rights to properties, their obligations to pay taxes and their access to colonial institutions. Regardless of the pejorative connotations inherent in this term and due to the historical character of this study, the use of the term “*indio*” in its definition as a legal entity is indispensable. In this study, I will have to use the term “*indio*,” or “Indian” in the English language, to refer to a category of the colonial judicial system, and its use serves a significant purpose by examining the way this juridical term impacted upon and affected those whom the colonial legal system categorized as such. Consequently, I will use the term “*indio*” in this study only to refer to the judicial entity and its application as used during the Spanish colonial period in Mexico that lasted from 1492 to 1812, the year of the promulgation of the Constitution of Cadiz. Although the history of how the term and juridical concept of “*indio*” or “Indian” changed through this extensive period of time and varied according to diverse regions of the Americas, this study will only focus on the judicial meaning that this term held in the vice regal capital of Mexico City, with special emphasis on the period at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The term “*indio*” and its use can be found starting in the first decades of the sixteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a referential term, the word “*indio*” is oftentimes also included in later nineteenth-century sources revised in this work. Therefore it is important to emphasize that the use of this term in the current study will be limited, and at all times it will appear within the Spanish colonial context and its use corresponds to the terms appearance in the historical documentation.

In this study, I will refer to the original people from the area of the Americas, including the area of Mesoamerica, Central America and the Andean region, as “Indigenous Peoples” due to the two reasons that I include in the discussion below. According to Raúl Alcides Reissner in his 1983 work entitled *El indio en los diccionarios: exégesis léxica de un estereotipo*,⁹¹ the term “*indígena*” appeared for the first time in Antonio de Nebrija’s dictionary of 1494. In his *Dictionarium Aelii Antonii Nebrissensis, Grammatici, Cronographi Regii*, Antonio de Nebrija included the following definitions:

Indigena, ae, pen. Cor. Varon, ó muger natural de alli.

Indigenitalis, e. Varon, ú muger natural de alli.

⁹¹ See Raúl Alcides Reissner, *El indio en los diccionarios: exégesis léxica de un estereotipo* (México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1983).

*Indigenitalis, e, pro eo quod est indigena, ae.*⁹²

The definition provided by Nebrija in his early work associated the term “indigenous” to a non-colonialist semantic, and instead the term referred to a locative nature which emphasized the origin of the people as well as their belonging to a specific geographic place. Consequently, the fifteenth-century term “indigenous” must be related to a certain legal status that did not relate directly to the term “*indio*,” which evidently remained associated within a legal context of conquest and subjugation. In this sense, it is interesting to note that the term “indigenous” did not appear either in the *Leyes de Indias* (16th-century), or in the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (18th-century) due to the colonialist nature of both of these regulations and laws; instead, the term that the Spanish legalists decided to include in the previously mentioned works was “*indio*.”

Although the definition of the term “indigenous” provided by Nebrija remains imprecise and even ambiguous according to modern contexts, the word currently has been redefined under other arguments that reclaim the importance and independent identity of the people who define themselves as indigenous. Currently in academia, especially within social and historical disciplines, the term indigenous has important connotations for carrying an anti-colonialist meaning that allows the reclaiming of the ethnic identity of both indigenous individuals and societies.

It is important to note that the inclusion of this term in the present study will be associated with the cultural and ethnic references based on the guidelines provided by José Martínez Cobo in his report written for the United Nations in 1982.⁹³ The definition of the term “Indigenous Peoples” provided by the United Nations explicitly denotes an anti-colonialist character by stating that: “Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them.”⁹⁴ Furthermore, the same document also describes the historical continuity of these indigenous communities, stating that they:

[It] may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

a) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;

⁹² Elio Antonio de Nebrija, *Dictionarium Aeli Antonio Nebrissensis, Grammatici, Chronographi Regii; Imo Quadruplex Ejusdem Antiqui Dictionarii*. Premium A R. P. M. Fr. Eugenio Zeballos, Matriti, Apud Viduam el Filium Petri (Marin Typographum, 174), 191.

⁹³ José R. Martínez Cobo, *Study on the Problem of Discriminations Against Indigenous Populations*, United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission of Human Rights (June 20, 1982), 70.

⁹⁴ “The Concept of Indigenous Peoples,” *Workshop on Data Collection and Desegregation for Indigenous Peoples*, (New York, 19-21 January, 2004), 2-4.

- b) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;
- c) Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
- d) Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
- e) Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
- f) Other relevant factors.⁹⁵

Based on the above argument, I still consider it important to emphasize the fact that Martínez Cobo's definition clearly states that the concept of indigenous identity remains as a cultural construction, either individually or collectively, and should never be considered as a racial typification.

Accordingly and due to the reasons given above, the term "native" will not be considered or used in this study because of its inherent pejorative semantic meaning. Nevertheless, historical documents may include the term "native," in which case the word will be accordingly cited and considered.⁹⁶

2.3 An Historical Understanding of the Term "Nahua"

Although the definition of the term "indigenous" is vital for the purpose of this study, so is the discussion of the term "Nahua," especially since this study focus on the analysis of the intellectual development of a specific group of this ethnic affiliation during the beginning of the nineteenth century. Current scholars, as well as the primary sources from the sixteenth century, constantly include the term Nahua to refer to ethnic groups that share the Nahuatl language and a common history. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, in his collective work entitled *Historia de las Cosas de la Nueva España* (in English receiving the title of *General History of the Things of New Spain*), included what probably remains as the earliest definition of the word Nahua, as well as its historical and ethnic implications. Within the content of the *General History of the Things of New Spain*, the authors explained that the term "Nahua" referred to an ethnic affiliation based on a common history and language spoken by diverse group of peoples:

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁶ Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 158-159.

Los nahuas eran los que hablaban la lengua mexicana, aunque no la hablaban ni pronunciaban tan clara como los perfectos mexicanos; y aunque eran nahuas, también se llamaban chichimecas, y decían ser de la generación de los toltecas que quedaron cuando los demás toltecas salieron de su pueblo y se despoblaron, que fue en tiempo cuando el dicho Quetzalcóatl se fue a la región de Tlapallan.⁹⁷

Similarly, in the same work Sahagún and his Nahua co-authors also specified that the term “mexicano” referred exclusively to a group who migrated to the Valley of Mexico led by Mecitl, a group that originally came from the “provinces of the Chichimecas.”⁹⁸ Apparently, Sahagún and his Nahua assistants clarified that the term “Nahua” better described the people who spoke the Nahuatl language, or Mexicano, regardless of their geographical origin, and that this group shared certain linguistic, ethnic and historical elements. On the other hand, the terms “*Mexicano*” or “*Mexica*” that Sahagún referred to in his sixteenth-century collective work alluded to a specific group of migrants who eventually established themselves and settled in the center of the Valley of Mexico.

Scholars currently use the term “Nahua” in order to describe the ethnic affiliation of an individual or a social group, and this term is well accepted among the Nahua people to identify themselves as having a common identity, history and traditions, although there are some other vocables such as “*macehualli*,” in a singular connotation, or “*macehualmeh*,” for a plural meaning to identify among themselves. It is also common usage for the term Nahua to be used to describe the ethnic identity and affiliation of the nineteenth-century individuals that I refer to in this study. Although the term “Nahua” is not used by the intellectuals of the nineteenth century to describe their own ethnic affiliation, the documents they authored reveal that those indigenous individuals who formed this specific group of people called themselves “*mexicanos*.” For instance, Faustino Chimalpopoca, one of the intellectuals that I will study in this work, authored a document in 1861 in which he used the term “*mexicano*” and “*nahuatl*” to refer to the language of the “ancient indigenous persons from Mexico.” However, in this same document, Chimalpopoca specified that the word “*mexicano*” referred specifically to the group of people who migrated from the northern part of Mexico and arrived to the Valley of Mexico to settle and found the city of Tenochtitlan. In this sense, Chimalpopoca emphasized the fact that the “*mexicanos*” differed ethnically and historically from other Nahuatl speaking groups such as the Chichimecas, Xochimilcas, Tecpanecas, etc.: “Los mexicanos al arribar a los tulares de

⁹⁷ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, Libro X, Sección 3, “Donde se declara quienes eran y se llamaban nahuas,” (México, Editorial Porrúa, 1999), 601.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Sección 12 “De los mexicanos,” 610.

Tenochtitlan, no conocían más que a los Tultecas, Chichimecas, Tecpanecas, Cuitlahuacas, Xochimilcas y Colhuas[...]"⁹⁹

In both Bernardino de Sahagún and later on in Faustino Chimalpopoca's works the authors concurred that the term "Nahua" described the people who both spoke the Nahuatl language and shared a common history.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the linguistic affiliation that these Nahua speaking group held also represented their cultural affinities, social affiliations and religious beliefs. Consequently, the ethnic identity shared by Nahua people included "[...] a fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group: a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviours, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties."¹⁰¹

Thus, the term "Nahua" will be recurrently used in this study in order to refer to the indigenous groups that spoke the Nahuatl language before, during, and after the period of the Spanish colonization. Similarly, it is important to clarify that at the time of the Spanish conquest, the inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico were mostly, but not exclusively, Nahuas; however, other territorial entities where Nahua people inhabited existed in other regions that now make up the current Mexican states of Durango, Estado de México, Guerrero, Morelos, Hidalgo, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz. For the purposes of this study, the term Nahua will be used to refer to the Indigenous Peoples from Central Mexico who spoke Nahuatl as their primary language during the nineteenth century and those who recognized themselves as members of this ethnic group. That said, in this current study the term Nahua will be used to refer to a group of Indigenous People whose original language, thus cultural and ethnic identity, is based on an understanding of the Nahuatl language.¹⁰²

Thus, in this study the term "Nahua intellectuals" implies and includes those intellectuals who belonged to groups of Indigenous Peoples who spoke Nahuatl as their first language, and to those who also personally claimed the Nahua culture as their heritage, by presenting themselves as direct heirs of their Nahua predecessors.

2.4 The Definition of the Term "Intellectual" and its Construction as a Concept

It is difficult to date with any precision the coinage of the term "intellectual," and even more the first use of the term for describing non-Western social and historical examples. Although the

⁹⁹ "Sobre el origen de la palabra México. Contestación que hace Faustino Chimalpopoca al escrito de José María Cabrera," *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía e Historia* VIII (México; Imprenta de Andrés Boix, 1861), 408.

¹⁰⁰ About this idea on the development of a historiographical Nahua tradition see Miguel Pastrana Flores, "Del castigo divino a la interculturalidad. Reflexiones sobre los nahuas coloniales del centro de México de la historiografía mexicana," in *Visiones del pasado. Reflexiones para escribir la historia de los pueblos de América*, ed. Ana Luisa Izquierdo y de la Cueva (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Estudios Mayas, 2016), 113-150.

¹⁰¹ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 80.

¹⁰² Lockhart, *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, 13.

term “intellectual” is widely used in different studies to refer to specific social groups in the Western hemisphere, its use to identify Indigenous Peoples’ experiences remains still scarce. This is probably due to the conflicts over the definition of the term “intellectual” and the westernized parameters that many scholars consider necessary to describe the intellectual production of certain groups that not necessarily belong to this western tradition. Nevertheless, the core ideas included in the definition of the term “intellectual” can be used to understand a social phenomenon in non-Western societies since the creation of culture, the production of ideas, and thus intellectuality, remain as universal human activities. Similarly, the use of certain basic ideas to understand intellectual manifestations in non-Western and pre-modern¹⁰³ societies must take into consideration the variability that human experiences offer to historians.

Historically, the use of the term “intellectual” in western societies became popular during the nineteenth century in Europe when in France, in 1898, Mathieu Dreyfus, a French officer, was accused by the French government of espionage and selling secrets to the enemy. The widely publicized case in France became an issue that would later be known as the “Dreyfus Affair.”¹⁰⁴

Eventually, due to the characteristics of the accusations made against Mr. Dreyfus by the members of the French government, the public opinion started an open discussion on what several French scholars considered a false accusation caused by the prejudice of the authorities on the ethnic origins of Mr. Dreyfus: who was Jewish.¹⁰⁵ The scholars who maintained the innocence of Mr. Dreyfus used the term “intellectuals” to publically describe themselves. The French writer Emile Zola also participated in the discussion about the innocence of Mr. Dreyfus and condemned the lack of veracity of the accusations made against Mr. Dreyfus. Zola then published an open letter entitled “*J’accuse*” or “I accuse” addressed to the French President of the Republic. This letter was published by a newspaper called “*L’Aurore*.” In this letter Zola stated the reasons why a group of scholars defended the innocence of Mr. Dreyfus from their own position as men of letters.¹⁰⁶ The names of some writers that had never participated in public debates, such as the writer Marcel Proust or the sociologist Emile Durkheim, appeared in newspapers and public opinion. Similarly, other characters such as Rosa Luxemburg became

¹⁰³ The use of the terms “pre-modern” and “modern” in this study follows the conventionalism of history regarding the temporary dissections of periods in Western history, considering that the 16th century marks the beginning of “modernity.” The use of these terms in the current work must not be misinterpreted as a parameter to measure levels of cultures or “civilizations.”

¹⁰⁴ Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics* (London: Longman, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ See Emile Zola, “I Accuse”, the part where the author expressed that “We are horrified by the terrible light the Dreyfus affair has cast upon it all, this human sacrifice of an unfortunate man, a “dirty Jew.” ” In *The Trial of Emile Zola* (New York: Benj. R. Tucker Publisher, 1898).

¹⁰⁶ See, Emile Zola, “J’accuse,” published in the newspaper *L’Aurore*, January 13, 1898; “Manifesto of the Intellectuals,” published in the French newspaper *L’Aurore*, January 14, 1898. Also see Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim, His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study* (California: Stanford University Press, 1973), with special emphasis on the following pages that refer to the Dreyfus affair and the coming debate that took place after Emile Zola published his letter “I accuse” addressed to the President of the French Republic, 320-353.

engaged in the public discussion about the inaccuracies and false accusations that led to the trial of Mr. Dreyfus.¹⁰⁷

The day after Zola published his letter “*J’accuse*,” a series of letters, public petitions, and statements signed by different scholars, students and artists¹⁰⁸ were published in the same French newspaper. With these publications the term “intellectual” started to be used widely by those who were part of the French Army or the government as a pejorative term associated with a public anti-establishment position and they even used it as a synonym for being non-patriotic or a being against the French government.¹⁰⁹

Without a doubt after the Dreyfus Affair the term “intellectual” became quite popular, and its use in publications associated with the Dreyfus Affair started an interesting debate about the meaning of the term. In associating the use of this term with certain social responsibilities that this initial group held towards social conflicts, this term came to be more widely applied to other groups of thinkers and writer. Since this event marked the public involvement of a select group of writers, artists and scholars on a specific social issue, the role of the “intellectuals” started to be associated with the public sphere.

As a result of this event, the term “intellectual” started to be associated or referred to a person in an academic position, fully conscious about the importance of the ideas that they created, possessed and transmitted to the public. These so-called “intellectuals” came to be viewed as people who mainly focused on the development and the creation of ideas or other similar activities that were associated with the exercise and the challenge of the human spirit, separated from any type of physical activities. Most importantly, and according to the context, the term intellectual also made an explicit reference to a group of educated individuals who denounced the malfunction of certain governmental institutions by defending the existence of a series of moral and civil values and rights that are recognized and valid for these same said institutions. In the case of the Dreyfus Affair, the intellectuals who decided to raise their voice publically and denounce through the publication of letters, opinions and manifestos published in newspaper left behind the private sphere where they usually were positioned, and for the first time as a group they started to occupy and play an active role in society by influencing the public opinion. Even though the term intellectual had been already used in 1894 by Guy de Maupassant with similar connotations,¹¹⁰ before the Dreyffus Affair intellectuals generally belonged to a private sphere, and they had little to do with public concerns. It was only after this nineteenth-century event when the term “intellectual” began to be associated, almost automatically, with the idea of the “public intellectual.”

¹⁰⁷ Lawrence D. Kritzman and Brian J. Reilly, ed., *The Columbia History of Twentieth-century French Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 363-364.

¹⁰⁸ *L'Aurore*, 14 janvier 1898; in <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>

¹⁰⁹ See the columns published in the newspaper *L'Aurore*, corresponding to February 2 and February 3 of 1898 in <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>

¹¹⁰ See Cahm, *The Dreyfus affair in French society and politics*.

As it was summarized by Gábor Tverdota and Antoine Janvier, modern French scholars, when these intellectuals decided to make public their opinion on a social event that they considered violated the rights of an individual, the social function of modern intellectuals was determined:

This symbolic gesture, however, is not limited by the introduction of a new term into the French public sphere, or the creation of a new “group of pressure” that was created for a specific purpose, but it also conveyed [...] The social function in question is the production and introduction into the public space of universalist principles, models, values and hierarchies of trans-contextual values [...], aimed at guiding the public actions of individuals [...] By not making use of other instruments than ordinary language, everyday language communication.¹¹¹

Consequently, definitions of terms such as “intellectuals” and “intellectuality” began to be also associated with social activism, criticism to the current establishment, defense of what could be considered as morally correct, in essence, the defense of just causes, non-conformism towards the *status quo* and its open criticism in cases of wrong doing. As a consequence, the term “intellectual” is currently associated with debates in the defense of certain humanitarian and environmental causes.¹¹²

Even though the Dreyfus Affair was a determinant event through which the term “intellectual” and the functions of those individuals who fit into the description were defined, the resulting debate among scholars led to a diversity of perspectives on the said definition. Nevertheless, and without ignoring the importance that other works had in the shaping of this term, the 1926 work of Antonio Gramsci entitled “The Formation of the Intellectuals”¹¹³ is fundamental to defining and understanding intellectualism in current studies. In his work, Antonio Gramsci discussed, in depth, the characteristics that existed between what he denominated as “traditional intellectuals” and “organic intellectuals.”

¹¹¹ Gábor Tverdota et Antoine Janvier, “Editorial: Les intellectuels dans la guerre civile européenne (1914-1945). Enjeux philosophiques d’une histoire à écrire,” *Cahiers du GRM* [En ligne], 6 (27 décembre 2014): 2. Consulted on February 17, 2015. URL: <http://grm.revues.org/478>. The textual citation in the French language reads as follows: “Ce geste symbolique ne se limitait toutefois pas à l’introduction d’un nouveau terme dans l’espace public français, ou à la fondation d’un nouveau « groupe de pression » créé pour un objectif particulier, mais il véhiculait également – et surtout – une revendication politique forte d’une fonction sociale spécifique par ceux-là même qui venaient de se nommer les intellectuels, revendication reprise et perpétuée par des générations successives d’individus définissant explicitement ou implicitement leur identité en tant qu’intellectuels. La fonction sociale en question consiste en la production et l’introduction dans l’espace public de principes universalistes, de modèles, de valeurs et de hiérarchies de valeurs trans-contextuels (détachables de leur situation de référence), ayant pour but d’orienter les actions publiques des individus comme celles des groupes sociaux, en n’usant d’autre instrument que le langage ordinaire, la communication langagière quotidienne.”

¹¹² Cahm, *The Dreyfus affair in French society and politics*.

¹¹³ Antonio Gramsci, *La formación de los intelectuales*, trans. Ángel González Vega (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1967).

According to Gramsci, intellectuals have always been present in every historical society, and his analysis is based on the premise that states that every individual is in essence an intellectual, since intellectual activity is inherent to all individuals. However, not every individual plays the role of an intellectual within his or her own society:

When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort. This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist.¹¹⁴

Gramsci stated that the term “intellectual” denotes the professional category of the intellectuals within a determined society, in which they had an important economic function since they provide homogeneity to the dominant or the leading group that positioned the intellectuals as societies’ superior social product. In this sense, Gramsci considered that “traditional intellectuals,” as the representatives of the *petite bourgeoisie*,¹¹⁵ came from a medieval tradition and within a historical context in which ecclesiastical groups held a monopoly on knowledge, and this medieval group was composed mostly by writers, philosophers and artists.¹¹⁶ In opposition, Gramsci described the characteristic of the “organic intellectual” within a modern context in which other social groups, and not the ecclesiastical sphere, held and administered the production of knowledge for the sake of the benefit of the ruling group. Modern ruling and leading groups created institutions that worked as instruments where certain individuals were educated and prepared in order to represent the achievements of the ruling class.¹¹⁷

These are the “organic intellectuals,” those who should have leadership and technical abilities, which determine their intellectual functionality for the establishment that sponsored their existence. These intellectuals hold certain conceptions and views of the world according to the society from which they belong. Thus, the critical position that organic intellectuals may have towards the establishment that produced them is also of vital importance since this contradictory position rarely advocates for the destruction of the prevalent political and social *status quo*, but rather for its transformation. This is also beneficial to the ruling class or leading groups that put the intellectuals in that position of criticism, since this contributes to an occasional modification and revitalization of the existing *status quo* in order to not cease the

¹¹⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: ElecBook, 1999), 140.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹¹⁶ Gramsci, *La formación de los intelectuales*, 23.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 28.

existence and leadership of the said ruling class, but rather reform and solidify its future. Nevertheless, Gramsci also mentioned the existence of the hierarchical organization of this intellectual activity, which must be differentiated into different levels and categories since this also, represented a quantitative difference in the activity that different intellectuals played in the society. Concerning this, Gramsci stated:

It is obvious that such a distinction has to be made just as it is obvious that other distinctions have to be made as well. Indeed, intellectual activity must also be distinguished in terms of its intrinsic characteristics, according to levels which in moments of extreme opposition represent a real qualitative difference—at the highest level would be the creators of the various sciences, philosophy, art, etc., at the lowest the most humble “administrators” and divulgators of preexisting, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth.¹¹⁸

According to Gramsci, one of the essential characteristics that defined an intellectual is that an Intellectual must have a critical consciousness about his or her importance within the establishment and a realization about the possible influence and impact that their intellectual creation could have on their society. Gramsci did not put aside the characteristics that other scholars discussed in response of the Dreyfus Affair, but these responses are included in his definition of organic intellectuals, which make of this group a complex one.¹¹⁹

Based on the previous characteristics and definitions, the term “organic intellectual” is currently and widely used by scholars from different disciplines who are interested in the study and analysis of this group and its role in the history of different societies and the involvement of this group of individuals in events of a diverse nature.

In this sense, the later works published by Quentin Skinner (1940-) and J. G. A. Pocock (1924-)¹²⁰ during the 1970’s and 1980’s in their guidelines for the study of both political and intellectual discourses followed the basic premise of the definition sketched by Gramsci. Over time, the definition of the term intellectual has been transformed and reshaped by different social disciplines, especially in the field of political science and sociology, making any multi-disciplinary understanding of this term a very complex one.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, 146.

¹¹⁹ Gramsci, *La formación de los intelectuales*, 33.

¹²⁰ See J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

¹²¹ There is a vast number of works from the sociology and political science perspective which focus on the analysis of intellectualism, and particularly on indigenous intellectualism in the Americas. For more about this see *Nuevos actores en América del Norte, Volumen 2: Identidades culturales y políticas*, ed. Edith Antal (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América del Norte, 2005).

Consequently, in this work I will use and define the term “intellectual” based on the premises previously referred to, and I consider that intellectuals are individuals with a high level of self consciousness about the ability and power of transformation that they have in the way they organized their life, as well as in their personal projects. As a result, I argue that these intellectuals necessarily project these ideas into the larger group of the entire society and in this manner they seek to have an impact in a determined collective sphere. Also, based on Gramsci’s idea of the “organic intellectuals,” another characteristic must be considered and that is that in order to be considered an intellectual, one has to be educated or have had access to a higher level of knowledge adopted through existing institutions in order to gain a wider understanding about the functioning and ideological basis in which governmental institutions are solidified. As a consequence, an intellectual is also an individual who is well aware about the rights and obligations established by the prevalent *status quo*. In this way, when the “social contract” established by the parties is threatened, or certain forces seek to limit, usurp or eliminate their rights, and/or the accessibility that they, as intellectuals, as well as the members of their community, have to the institutional life and practices of their society, or attempt to limit their political participation, the intellectual will be willing to defend not only his individual rights, but also the rights of his group or community.¹²²

This sense of self-consciousness allows the intellectual to find a place of institutional representation, as well as their active participation, for him and his community. In case the intellectuals or their communities are excluded, intentionally or accidentally, by the ruling class or the administration of the government, the intellectual they feel obligated to act accordingly in order to attack those, either institutions or individuals, who attempt against their position as participants of a social order.¹²³ As such, these intellectuals are also bearers of the worldview and moral conduct of the society to which they belong or represent.

The previous definition and the basic guidelines provided by Gramsci, in particular the elements that identify the “organic intellectual,” suggest the premises of universality that some theoretical definitions offer to modern scholars. The basic elements and characteristics that define the term “intellectual” can be used as theoretical and methodological tools to approach an

¹²² A similar definition of the term “indigenous intellectual” among the context of modern day Mexico is offered by Natividad Gutiérrez Chong, “Liderazgo intelectual indígena en México y la frontera.” In this book, Natividad Gutiérrez referred to indigenous intellectuals in the following words: “Ante la certeza de que no todos los indígenas educados son intelectuales, ¿qué es lo que identifica con firmeza a quienes lo son? En primer lugar, un acto de conciencia que determina una firme convicción para realizar proyectos de vida individuales y esfuerzos políticos o culturales conjuntos. Esta característica hace que el intelectual indígena reconozca, tanto en México como en Estados Unidos y la frontera, una limitación de autodesarrollo impuesta por sus niveles de integración a la nación (mestizaje como política “de inclusión”, políticas de reconocimiento, *melting pot*, derechos civiles, etc.), las políticas indigenistas de asimilación. El intelectual indígena no sólo está dedicado sistemáticamente a la búsqueda, reconstrucción o fabricación de su herencia cultural, sino que también es consciente, denuncia y se moviliza en contra de la usurpación de sus derechos universales y colectivos [...]” on page 112.

¹²³ Josep Picó and Juan Pecourt, “El estudio de los intelectuales: una reflexión” –“The Study of Intellectuals: An Overview,” *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, No. 123 (Jul-Sep, 2008): 35-58, 41.

analysis of societies in which intellectuals hold an important position. In this sense, the use of the term “intellectuals” to refer to a specific group among Indigenous People is completely valid, in such way that the term “indigenous intellectual” could be used, accordingly within the historical context, and this term is also useful for the study of diverse geographical areas, social groups and historical periods, including the societies from Mesoamerica and the colonial Americas.

2.5 Approaching the Concept of “Indigenous Intellectuals”

As we have seen above, the term “intellectual” is a conceptual construction initially based on the characteristics of western and/or westernized societies. Since this is the common understanding of most scholars, it is indispensable to explain the way in which this term will be used in the present study. The use of the term “intellectual” in the current work aims to refer to a specific group of “indigenous intellectuals” in the area of Mesoamerica as a way of affirming the existence of an indigenous intellectual tradition in the Americas. This idea states that there existed a diverse indigenous intellectual tradition in Mesoamerica before and after the European invasion, which synergistically continued during and after the Spanish colonization of the Mesoamerican zone. Since this particular study focuses on the analysis of some of the indigenous intellectuals who lived in Mexico City during the first decades of the nineteenth century, it is vital to consider that these individuals followed and perpetuated an intellectual tradition that can be traced from pre-conquest times and continues until today.

The discussion about the existence of a Mesoamerican indigenous intellectual tradition that continued through the centuries may be controversial due to the nature of the meaning, origins and implications of the term “intellectual.” Modern literature from diverse social disciplines argues that indigenous intellectuals in Latin America had their historical origins during the nineteenth century, but that they did not emerge as a consolidated group until the second half of the twentieth century.¹²⁴ Even though this modern literature does not deny the existence of indigenous intellectualism before the Spanish colonization of the Americas, it does not use the term “intellectual” to describe the indigenous knowledge tradition that existed before or during the period of the Spanish colony.¹²⁵ This is probably due to the westernized connotations and parameters that the term “intellectual” infers in their understanding, as well as the origins of its coinage, which are arguably not comparable with the social characteristics that prevailed in Mesoamerica before the invasion of the Americas led by the European groups.

¹²⁴ See the works of Claudia Zapata Silva, “Origen y función de los intelectuales indígenas,” *Cuadernos Interculturales* 3, número 4 (enero-junio 2005): 65-87.

¹²⁵ See Natividad Gutiérrez Chong, *Mitos nacionalistas e identidades étnicas*; and Gloria Alicia Caudillo Félix, *El discurso indio en América Latina*.

The utilization of the term “intellectual” or “indigenous intellectuals” would be erroneous if we consider that the concepts suggested by theoretical currents in the area of the humanities or the social sciences work as absolute concepts. This misconception about theoretical concepts and the construction of historical definitions leads ultimately to wrongly formulated interpretations, considering these concepts as templates, molds or immovable parameters through which societies are measured, hierarchized, or judged. Under these circumstances, if we consider that the word “intellectual” is an exclusively western and/or westernized term that works as a template, or mold to measure and compare Mesoamerican societies with western ones, the use of the term “intellectual” must indeed be scholarly erroneous, biased and colonialist.¹²⁶

Consequently, in this study I advocate for the use of theoretical concepts, such as the use of the term intellectual, and ideas such as “institutionalized intellectualism” as open terms, in constant construction. As a result, I will attempt to consider these terms as inclusive structural models, not exclusively westernized concepts. The usefulness of theoretical approaches and concepts focuses mainly on the fact that they are formed based on the observation of collective experiences rather than on individual examples. This inclusive feature of theoretical concepts and their use serves to give us collective guidelines that are based on sets of social similarities that contribute to providing us with common elements that are familiar to us for our analysis.¹²⁷

The inclusive character of the use of various theoretical methodologies, such as analogical hermeneutics, mentioned above, and concepts such as “institutionalized intellectualism” serve to highlight the similarities that exist between cultural systems and they are frequently used as resource in several social science disciplines: the field of history is not an exception.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, this scholarly position would be unilateral and exclusive if the approach to “the otherness” is made without the inclusion of the worldview and cultural context of the parties that collaborate in the development of this study, which in this particular case would be the Nahua people.¹²⁹ Thus, the use of hermeneutical methodological elements in the process of this analysis will attempt to create a mutual dialogue between the parties involved in this study, in such way that a scholarly approach from dichotomic statements, such as “subjects” and “objects,” can be effectively alienated from this study. In this sense, the review, reading and understanding of the primary sources written by Indigenous Peoples, both in the Nahuatl language and/or in Spanish, is fundamental to achieving the hermeneutical exercise in this study.

The word “intellectual” and its theoretical implications is still restrictive and only a few modern scholars use such a term from the historical perspective to refer to a certain group of learned specialists among the people from the Americas, both before and after their colonization

¹²⁶ See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London & New York: Zed Books Ltd, Dunedin and University of Otago Press, 2006), 28-29.

¹²⁷ Pierre Guiraud, *La Semiología*, 31.

¹²⁸ See James Lockhart, *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, 4.

¹²⁹ See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 289.

by the Europeans. However, the recognition of the existence of educated elites among Indigenous Peoples, especially during the Spanish colonial period in the Americas, has led several scholars to use the term “lettered” or “literate” to refer and define several of the characteristics of these groups in the Americas or others in similar non-western societies.

The term “lettered” is mostly associated with the ability that one or various individuals have acquired to read and write. Such a term also defines the group of individuals who are able to decode and/or interpret the graphic pluralism and/or other means that certain societies’ developed to keep records about the history of the community, the actions of the ruling class, governmental administration, issues relating to cultural worldviews, among other aspects worthy of recording. Nevertheless, the term “lettered” is also associated in a limited way with literacy, its learning and practice,¹³⁰ while the term “intellectual” is associated with the creation, transformation, and divulgation of knowledge in a way that directly impacts upon or influences the fate of the society, not in its totality, but rather only for a certain sector of individuals in that society.

The connotation of the term “lettered,” or in its Spanish version using the term “letrados,”¹³¹ extols the importance of literacy as a primordial activity to keep and maintain a collective memory and provide security to the institutions created under the sponsorship of the dominant establishment. From this perspective, oral history and the spoken word both reflect the precariousness and uncertainty of their users and their society.¹³² In this sense, the lettered individuals in modern western societies would be considered members of a learned hierarchical educated group such as the clergymen, administrators, educators, professionals, writers and all those who are alphabetized and are associated with the social group in power. In other words, the term lettered emphasizes the importance of the written word and the ability to reproduce it. This statement implies a limited ability of those considered as “lettered” to only reproduce and copy information, not to organically produce it.

Summarizing, the term “lettered” praises and implies the sacralization of the written word and also demonstrates its clear disdain for the pictorial, the oral tradition, and the spoken word, as if these activities were less important than the other. The use of the term “lettered” subtly implies the superiority of the written word over all other expressions, including the use of diverse codification and/or even instances of graphic pluralism where multiple cultures use several concurrent systems to keep their collective memory alive and trace their history. In this sense, the use of this term “lettered” openly refers to western or westernized societies that had developed or adopted certain types of writing systems that were influenced by the European

¹³⁰ Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis, “Introduction,” in *Indigenous Intellectuals. Knowledge, Power and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes*, eds. Ramos and Yannakakis (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 1-17.

¹³¹ See Ángel Rama, *La ciudad letrada*; pról., Hugo Archugar (Montevideo: Editorial Arca, 1998).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 36.

writing systems. By following the guidelines that praise the term “lettered” non-western or non-westernized societies, including the social strata that these societies supported or created to keep and record their historical records are excluded.¹³³ Thus, the use of the term “lettered,” or other similar terms, for the study of indigenous intellectuals is, by its own definition, exclusive and limiting, and this is a reason why I personally do not consider the use of the term “lettered” as synonymous with the term “indigenous intellectuals” in this study.

Some scholars prefer to use the term “lettered” instead of the word “intellectual” because this last term, they argue, has a “westernized” connotation that the definition itself implies. Based on this statement, there are several series of early essays and scholarly works that argue against the use of the term “intellectual” to refer to any indigenous group before the European colonization of the Americas. The refusal of using the term “intellectual” to refer to specific groups in Mesoamerica and post conquest-Latin America in general are based on the assumption that the term “intellectual” follows an immobile character that only considers the social characteristics of European and/or western or westernized societies. Another argument against the use of this term derives from the fact that the term “intellectual” took shape, as we have discussed above, in nineteenth-century France, therefore some have argued that the term’s meaning and its conceptual implications seem to be anachronistic. This is one of the main arguments that scholarly detractors have used to deny the existence of intellectuals in the early Americas, especially in Mesoamerica, denying the existence of these indigenous intellectuals among the peoples of colonial Mexico and the Andes.

In following this argument, there are some modern scholars who defend their position by arguing that it is inaccurate to talk about intellectuals and intellectuality in the early Americas. One of these authors is Oscar Mazín¹³⁴ who argues that it is imprecise to state that an “intellectual” elite existed during the period of the Spanish regime in the Americas. Mazín denied the existence of intellectuals in New Spain due to the fact that he argues that the division of systematic knowledge as it is currently conceived by scholars was inexistent. According to this hypothesis, this division of the production of knowledge was eventually substituted and evolved into its specialization by following the division of areas of knowledge created during the period of the European enlightenment during the eighteenth century.

Mazín also proposed to eliminate the term “intellectual” and substitute it by the term *gente de saber* to refer to people who were considered as “lettered.” According to Mazín, the term *gente de saber* applies to the contact that peoples in the Americas had with the knowledge produced through the European influence of the Enlightenment. This knowledge included the

¹³³ For a brief and summarized discussion about this topic and the way American ethnohistorians have approached this subject, see the introduction to the issue on *Graphic Pluralism: Native American Systems of Inscription and the Colonial Situation*, *Ethnohistory* 57, Number 1 (Winter 2010): 1-9.

¹³⁴ Oscar Mazarín, “Gente de saberes en los virreinos de Hispanoamérica (siglos XVI a XVIII),” in *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina. La ciudad letrada de la conquista al modernismo*, ed. Carlos Altamirano (Argentina-España: Katz Editores, 2008), 53-78.

practice of classical letters, classical languages, and in the particular case of the New Spain, alphabetic writing in indigenous languages.

Mazín argued that while the term “*letrados*” could also seem appropriate to describe the educated elites that emerged in New Spain, the reality was that this term was used to describe all those who “*ejercían las letras*” during the first centuries of the Spanish colonization. Nevertheless, after the 18th century the word became limited to only refer to those who practiced Law and other types of disciplines that Americans, Indigenous Peoples or *mestizos*, learned directly from the European colonizers. The historical limitation and reason that Mazín found in the colonial American context is the fact that colonial power and institutional authority did not flourish in an independent way in the Americas, since the institutions that existed in New Spain lacked autonomy. In other words, Mazín advocated for the idea that scholarly institutions in Spanish America merely represented the leading intellectual institutions that existed in Europe, specifically those in Spain. The article written by Mazín seems to be one of the more eloquent works that opposes the use of the term intellectual to the educated elites that existed in the territory of New Spain, and it is included in this review in order to consider a different perspective and definition of the term “intellectual.”

In opposition to Mazín’s hypothesis, this study reaffirms the existence of intellectual elites in early America, specifically in the area of Mesoamerica and the Andes. As this present study argues, both of these regions experienced the development of an early indigenous intellectual tradition. Therefore, I also argue that this indigenous intellectual tradition continued after the Spanish conquest in Mexico, the area where this study focuses, and persisted during the colonial period and even continued after Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1820. The existence of this intellectual tradition, originated and created from the core belief systems of the indigenous societies, continued in the tumultuous and conflictive nineteenth century and the available documentation will demonstrate that this tradition lasted even after the period of the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

By considering this argument about the longevity and validity of the existence of an indigenous intellectual tradition in Mexico it is important to review its main historical characteristics by tracing it from its origins in pre-conquest Mesoamerica.

2.6 “The Rupture Generation:” On Generation Units and Ethnic Bonds

The selection of a relatively reduced number of Nahua intellectuals for this particular study is based on two elemental criteria: first, available documentation; and second, the identification of

a group of individuals who shared similar characteristics based on their common historical experiences.¹³⁵

With the purpose of rigorously approaching a group that I insist in defining as the “rupture generation” in indigenous intellectualism in New Spain and early national Mexico, it is necessary to define a few concepts in which this study is based upon. One of these ideas is the definitions of “group” and “generation.” This is a vital step for the purpose of this study since the word “group” does not necessary imply homogeneity in this particular case study, but the contrary. In the specific case of the Nahua intellectuals, the term “group” should implicate ideas associated with collective historical experiences shared by the members of this group. Even though the definition of such a term is essential, it is also primordial that its definition recognizes also a level of individuality among its members. In the first instance, a group can be defined as:

1. Two or more people who share a common social identification of themselves, or, [...] perceive themselves to be members of the same social category.
2. A collection of individuals whose existence as a collective is rewarding to the individuals.
3. A set of individuals who share a common fate, that is, who are interdependent in the sense that an event which effects one member is likely to affect all.
4. Two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such manner that each person influences and is influenced by the other person.”¹³⁶

Based on this outline, I selected these intellectuals out of a large list of names of Indigenous Peoples for specific reasons. As I continuously have emphasized, these Nahua intellectuals were the last generation of Indigenous Peoples who gained access to higher education by attending racially segregated or semi-segregated Spanish colonial educational institutions; consequently, this group of intellectuals formed the last generation of students whom the colonial system labeled as *indios*. Thus, this group of intellectuals consciously remained and self defined themselves as members of a specific group. The process of gaining access to a higher education sphere or the political arena provided them with the elements that made them aware of their social condition, both as individuals and as members of a larger community, which relied on a series of shared historical experiences. These elements also contributed to make these intellectuals aware of their ethnicity as an element of political advancement for their community.¹³⁷ Consequently, these Nahua intellectuals not only encountered, but also documented the transition that they experienced from living under a colonial regime, to residing into a new political order based on political liberalism.

¹³⁵ Bertrand M. Roehner and Leonard J. Rahilly, *Separatism and Integration: A Study in Analytical History* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 74-195.

¹³⁶ Brian Mullen and George R. Goethals, eds., *Theories of Group Behavior* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), 2.

¹³⁷ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts of Post Colonialist Studies*, 83.

In terms of the definition of a “generation,” according to basic sociology, there are several concepts that try to define the term “generation,” as well as their multiple meanings. Nevertheless, and according to the case in question, there are at least four major semantic meanings for this term:

1. Generation as a principle of kinship descent.
2. Generation as a cohort.
3. Generation as a life stage.
4. Generation as a historical period.¹³⁸

By considering the historical elements of the Nahua intellectuals’ works analyzed in this study, the sociological principle of cohort as a social effect, which is broadly defined as “[...a group or members who] in one generation react the same way, but differently from members of another. So when responses to the same phenomenon are similar within, but different between generations, this is cohort effect.”¹³⁹ In this sense, the “cohort effect” may be explained as the way a group of individuals experience specific historical events together under similar circumstances closely related with the access that these individuals had to wealth and power. This closeness or distance from having access to social justice, social mobility, education, and other collective rights deeply influenced the way these individuals socialize, relate and/or antagonize with other social spheres that are either closer or farthest from their own collective benefits or social privileges. Consequently, this cohort effect is not necessarily related specifically to age, but rather to an intricate series of factors that conceptualize the existence of these groups as heterogeneous and dynamic constructions.

In this sense, this study will follow the theoretical proposal made by Karl Mannheim about his definition of generation as a historical construction rather than a biological-lineal definition commonly used by natural sciences. Mannheim proposed the use of the term “generation units” instead of the term “generation” in order to identify specific groups of individuals who share among them common interests and social experiences. The use of the term “generation units” allows us to understand the complexity in which different groups of individuals converge in one historical moment and geographical space.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the basic guidelines provided by Mannheim in order to conceptualize the generation units are:

1. A generation unit is made of by a concrete group, the union of a number of individuals, through natural developed or consciously willed ties.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ David I. Kertzer, “Generation as a Sociological Problem,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 125-149, 126.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generation,” in *Collected Works. Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge, 1952), 276-322.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 282.

2. This group of individuals shared a common location in to specific historical and social processes. This group is determined by the way these individuals approach to determine social factors, approach to material of action and they way they assimilate it and apply it.¹⁴²
3. The members of a specific generation unit must share similarities in their geographical location. This element positions them to experience similar events and data as their counterparts. The members of this generation units must have born in the same cultural and historical region, as well as to share a similar social strata within the society in which they lived.¹⁴³
4. The members of this group willingly participate in the common destiny of the historical and social unit they belong.
5. The members of this generation unit experience the same concrete problems within a similar period of time, thus, they had a similar perception toward collective issues.¹⁴⁴
6. The members of this generation find cohesion through their membership or sense of belonging to this specific group based on both their ethnic similarities and circumstances determined by the geographical region where they reside.
7. In the case of generation units of intellectuals, it is also possible to consider that the members of this specific unit develop their own entelechy, but not necessarily.

The use of generation units, as Mannheim manifested, allows this study to consider that within any generation -considering this term as a biological temporary consequence- there can exist a number of differentiated antagonistic units that converge within the same historical and geographical space.

Thus, the concepts of “generation units” defined under historical terms and based on the principles of a cohort are understood as “[...] a set of individuals who pass some crucial state at approximately the same time, like marriage, first employment, [etc.]”¹⁴⁵ Even though birth or social mobility are notoriously considered as a cohort in sociological studies, in historical disciplines a cohort remains mostly defined by collective experiences and the reactions or behaviors that one selected group or groups experience and perform towards these occurrences. These elements make of the concept of generation as a cohort and its members as a unique social and historical phenomenon that also reinforce a bond among those who experience similar events; that is to say, among the members of this generation. Consequently, and based on the premises postulated by Mannheim, these specific historical and social experiences profoundly

¹⁴² Ibid., 289.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 303.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 304.

¹⁴⁵ Gosta Carlsson and Katarina Karlsson, “Age, Cohorts and the Generation of Generations,” *American Sociological Review* 35, Number 4 (1970):710–718.

influenced certain sectors of a specific population, regardless of the size or number of individuals who conform a “generation unit.”

In this sense, the theoretical approach provided by José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), complements the historical guidelines exposed by Mannheim, which contribute to the understanding of the generational experiences from a historical perspective that goes beyond the kinship conceptualization of the term generation.¹⁴⁶ According to Ortega y Gasset, generations became influenced by their intellectual antecessors and are determined to act according to their agency:

Life, then, for each generation, is a task in two dimensions, one of which consists in the reception, through the agency of the previous generation, of what has had life already, e. g., ideas, values, institutions and so on, while the other is the liberation of the creative genius inherent in the generation concern. The attitude of the generation cannot be the same towards its own active agency as towards it has received from without. What has been done by others, that is, executed and perfected in the sense of being completed, reaches us with peculiar unction attached to it: it seems consecrated, and in view of the fact that we have not ourselves assisted in its construction, we tend to believe that is the work of no one in particular, even that it is reality itself.¹⁴⁷

In this sense, the historical meaning and conceptualization based on the basic premises exposed by Mannheim and Ortega y Gasset are closely related to the history of ideas also expressed in the studies of Quentin Skinner in relation with the development of intellectualism, or as Mannheim called it, *entelechy*.¹⁴⁸

Consequently, the term “generation unit” in the case of this particular study, has been used as an element to identify one specific group within a society that had experienced a series of changes that represent a rupture or deep transformation in the political, social order or *status quo*.¹⁴⁹ In these cases, political ideas, historical experiences, as well as agency, play an important role in defining a generation unit and in understanding the way this said group historically act within its own context and reality.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, the concept of generation unit must not be

¹⁴⁶ See José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁴⁸ See Quentin Skinner, “Conclusion,” in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Volume II: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 348-358.

¹⁴⁹ This is interesting to see in studies focused on the transformation of the Soviet system. See Mark R Kissinger, “In Search of Generations in Soviet Politics,” *World Politics* 38, Number 2 (1986): 288–314.

¹⁵⁰ Also in the case of studying intellectualism in China, see Nora Sausmikat, “Generations, Legitimacy, and Political Ideas in China: The End of Polarization or the End of Ideology?,” *Asian Survey* 43, Number 2 (2003): 352–84.

attached to a lineal, progressive or evolutionary character since this construction follows historical patterns of multilineal continuities, characterized by social heterogeneity.

This major element is the recognition or construction of shared experiences that self defined these Nahua intellectuals as members of a specific group, generation or units as we just reviewed, outside the “dominant group,” or in counter position with the establishment.¹⁵¹ This can be defined as ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity not only defined the persona of each one of the Nahua intellectuals referred to in this study, but it also delineates a sense of belonging that goes beyond the definition of social class or the Spanish colonial *casta* to which these Nahua intellectuals were assigned. Nahua intellectuals shared this social phenomenon as a result of common experiences from both the political and cultural transition that Indigenous Peoples of New Spain went through in the early years of the nineteenth century.

In this sense, R. A. Schermerhorn offered a definition of ethnicity that provides us with some basic elements to understand this phenomenon in the case of these Nahua intellectuals:

An ethnic groups is [a] collectivity within a larger society having a real or putative common ancestry (that is, memories of a shared historical past whether of origins or historical experiences such as colonization, immigration, invasion or slavery); a shared consciousness of a separate, named, group of identity; and cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.¹⁵²

This collective ethnic identity relies on the individuals’ recognition about their collective historical and social experiences. Frequently, the construction of the ethnic identity, as it is in the case of these Nahua intellectuals, remained based on the perception of a common ancestry, mythical, imaginary and/or historical. It is important to refer to the ethnic identity of these Nahua intellectuals since it persisted beyond “cultural assimilation” and centuries of living under the colonial regime.

Thus, the conscious recognition of their ethnicity at a time of drastic social and political transformations made of these Nahua intellectuals an interesting case of study, especially since this phenomenon will not be found in later intellectuals from indigenous backgrounds. This is the case of Benito Juarez (Oaxaca, 1806-1872), or Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (Guerrero, 1834-1893), to name a few, for whom the nineteenth-century political liberalism of the post independence period contributed to define the ethnicity of these authors as separated from their original indigenous backgrounds, making of them members of another generation unit.

¹⁵¹ See, Richard A. Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relation: A Framework for Theory Research* (New York: Random House, 1970), 12-13.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

Without a doubt, during the eighteenth century there remained an important number of indigenous students who had access to higher education through attending educational institutions. In this sense, both the *Colegio de San Gregorio* and the *Academia de San Carlos* remained the higher educational institutions that received an overwhelming number of indigenous students who came from all over the territories of New Spain. Also, in these institutions being an “*indio*” student remained a necessity for admission, which provided with a sense of collective identity to their indigenous students that was not promoted by other schools, in which being an “*indio*” did not have the same importance for the admission criteria due to diverse reasons.

This ethnic identity remains present in the documentation that these Nahua intellectuals wrote, in combination to their general sense of being subordinated and underrepresented by the political system that came after the Independence of Mexico. These are a few of the social characteristics that define this group as a minority among the rest of the establishment or the so-called “dominant group.” In this sense, the term minority must be understood as a social group, among many others, whose interests are underrepresented by the prevalent political system, or whose interests and needs are subordinated to the groups in power, excluding them from participating in the process of decision making that concerned the group to which these “minorities” belonged. In this sense, the term minority is not used in this study as a demographic characteristic, but rather to measure the political representation of a very specific group after the second decade of the nineteenth-century in Mexico. This situation makes of these Nahua intellectuals a reduced but interesting sample for the study of intellectuality among Indigenous Peoples in the capital of New Spain.

These intellectuals shared either a common ethnicity or ethnic background. Since ethnicity is a cultural and personal construction of individual identity, it may not be confused or used as a synonym for the concept of *casta*. This is an important feature to consider, especially in understanding the case of Pedro Patiño Ixtolinque, whose biographical data will be reviewed later, who belonged to the *castizo* caste, but who identified himself as Indigenous instead. Based on this premise, the documentation reviewed for the purpose of this study reveals that the above mentioned Nahua intellectuals proudly assumed themselves to be either Nahuas, or in their own words “*mexicanos*,” a term frequently used in New Spain to refer to Indigenous Peoples with Nahua origins and/or indigenous population from Mexico City, or as *indios*. Based on these characteristics, the documentation reviewed in the next section of this study remains diverse. Thus, the primary sources collected for this study range from personal letters to political pamphlets, bureaucratic material, notary accounts, without leaving aside artistic creations.

In order to understand both the life and work of these intellectuals, I consider it also pertinent to include brief biographical sketches of information about the Nahua intellectuals who are the focus of this study. Despite the fact that the biographical historical genre is not the

purpose of this study, it is indispensable for the purpose of this work in order to understand the basic context and information about these intellectuals.

2.7 Recent Historiography on Indigenous Intellectuals in Colonial and Nineteenth-Century Mexico

Currently there are several studies that focus particularly on the study and analysis of indigenous intellectualism, especially several studies that have centered on the analysis of indigenous intellectualism in Mexico and the Andean region after the Spanish conquest. In general, there is a consensus in these studies about indigenous intellectualism during the early colonial period that proposes that the conquest, due to its violent nature, disturbed the intellectual tradition that already existed in the Americas before the contact with the European conquistadors. Nevertheless, all these studies argue that this tradition continued during colonial times.

In New Spain, the main characteristics of indigenous intellectualism obeyed the pre-existing cultural and geographical colonialist character where the different indigenous intellectual traditions developed (i.e. the Nahua, Mixtec, Zapotec, and Maya cultural regions). Most of the scholars interested in the study of indigenous intellectualism agree upon the existence of an indigenous intellectual tradition in New Spain, and particularly a vibrant one in the capital of the colony, where this indigenous intellectual tradition thrived in religious enclosures established by different religious orders, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and the Jesuits.

The idea that Mesoamerica produced specialized elite “intellectuals” is not a new idea at all. Angel Rama (1926-1983) in his work entitled *La ciudad letrada* already suggested the existence of indigenous intellectual groups in the Americas previous to the European conquest. The basis of Angel Rama’s work focused on noticing the existence or influence that indigenous intellectualism had on the shaping of Latin American intellectualism and a Latin American mentality, even though Rama’s work centered mostly on the analysis of colonial urban centers.¹⁵³

Georges Baudot (1935-2002), much earlier in his work *Las letras precolombinas*¹⁵⁴ also emphasized the fact that intellectualism among Mesoamerican societies was prevalent among the members of the aristocracy. In a similar way, more recently Patrick Johansson and Miguel Pastrana, in their respective works,¹⁵⁵ argued for the conceptualization of indigenous intellectualism through the analysis of the content of different Nahua sources from pre-conquest times, and an examination of the function that the content of these sources played even after the Spanish conquest and the establishment of colonialism in Mexico. In this sense, both authors

¹⁵³ See Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Montevideo: Arca, 1998).

¹⁵⁴ Georges Baudot, *Las letras precolombinas* (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1979), 291.

¹⁵⁵ See Patrick Johansson, *La palabra, la imagen y el manuscrito*.

advocate for the analysis of an intellectual Nahua tradition through the perspective of a *longue durée* analysis of Nahua sources and the impact of the ideas that people such as the *tlamatinime* (or those who were in charge of preserving the collective memory of the Nahua people) were able to transmit their knowledge to a generation of Nahuas that were educated under the tutelage of the diverse Catholic religious orders established in the New Spain.

On the other side, studies made by Margarita Menegus and Rodolfo Aguirre¹⁵⁶ about the indigenous intellectuals who were educated under sponsorship of the Spanish authorities, both the civil and religious ones, show the importance that the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* had in the shaping of the first generation of indigenous intellectuals under the Spanish regime following them until the final decadence of the college. At this point, Menegus and Aguirre argue that the intellectual activity among indigenous intellectuals continued in an institutionalized way even after the decline of the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco*, since the *Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* also opened its doors to the education of indigenous students and did not have any racial restrictions for access to members of different *castas* in New Spain. In their book entitled *Los indios, el sacerdocio y la Universidad en Nueva España, siglos XVI-XVIII*,¹⁵⁷ Menegus and Aguirre also point out how the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* declined mostly due to the fact that the main purpose of the existence of the *Colegio* was to prepare Indigenous People for the creation of an indigenous clergy. This reason, they argued, was the cause of the decadence of the college after 1560 since the educational policy of the Spanish colony gradually changed and the Crown and Church reconsidered the creation of an indigenous clergy, with bitter arguments over this issue between and among both the religious and civil authorities. Nevertheless, almost at the same time, the opening of the *Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* represented another opportunity for the indigenous elites, since this university accepted students from all of New Spain, which quickly made this institution into a place where students from diverse *castas* and from different backgrounds converged.

The authors of this book state that without a doubt, studying at the University of Mexico was an enriching experience for all the students, but especially for those indigenous ones, who found the ability to engage in intellectual exchange with other indigenous pupils from different regions from throughout New Spain. This opportunity of coexisting with a diverse population of university students inspired in the indigenous pupils an ambition as a group to replace the “*letrados criollos*” from their positions of privilege that they occupied within the colonial system. By recognizing themselves as “*indios letrados*” the indigenous students at the *Universidad de Mexico* or at another institution not only re-appropriated their identity, diversified their intellectual tasks as well as their economic activities, but most importantly, their

¹⁵⁶ Margarita Menegus Bornemann, “El colegio de San Carlos Borromeo: Un proyecto para la creación del clero indígena en el siglo XVIII,” in *Educación, universidad y sociedad: El vínculo crítico*, ed. Hugo Casanova and Claudio Lozano (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2004), 289-301.

¹⁵⁷ Margarita Menegus Bornemann and Rodolfo Aguirre, *Los indios, el sacerdocio y la Universidad en Nueva España*.

educational stay in the capital of New Spain and their studying in a prestigious university, made the indigenous students self-aware about the social influence that they could have if they were able to gain an influential position in the colony. Nevertheless, the authors argue that this did not represent a threat against the establishment of the colony insomuch as the number of privileged indigenous students who had access to be educated at the university was minimal in comparison to the total indigenous population in New Spain. Additionally, both Menegus and Aguirre emphasized the fact that for the members of the indigenous elites in the capital of New Spain it was indispensable that their heirs had access to higher education, and not only simple access to the “*primeras letras*” which many caciques considered as insufficient.

In his prolific work referring to the study of indigenous intellectuals in colonial Mexico, David Tavárez is one of the scholars who supports the importance and analysis of the characteristics of indigenous intellectualism, with a special comparative emphasis on two regions of New Spain: Oaxaca and central Mexico.¹⁵⁸ In his works, David Tavárez explores the intellectual expressions materialized by indigenous intellectuals during the colonial era, emphasizing their role as translators, or copyists, and interpreters of religious documents written originally in Latin or Spanish and transcribed into indigenous languages by using the alphabet. Tavárez’ interest in studying these documents is to reveal and evaluate the importance that these indigenous intellectuals had during the colonial period, by emphasizing the fact that these intellectuals did not simply transcribe and translate these documents. Tavárez argues that by doing these activities these indigenous intellectuals revealed their knowledge of Christianity, and through their Mesoamerican world-view, they made their own interpretations about western knowledge. According to Tavárez, the access that these intellectual had to literacy not only helped them to write down their own knowledge, but it also aided them in their own interpretation about religious texts and political situations, which provided them an intellectual independence that was utilized in their favor in order to preserve their socially privileged positions within the colonial establishment.

A critical revision about the importance that indigenous intellectuals had in the collaboration of the colonial regime established in New Spain is also conducted by Silver Moon in her dissertation, entitled *The Imperial College of Tlatelolco and the Emergence of a New Nahua Intellectual Elite in New Spain (1500-1760)*.¹⁵⁹ In this work, Moon critically reviewed the relationship that Fray Bernardino de Sahagún had with some of the pupils of the *Colegio de*

¹⁵⁸ David Tavárez, “Nahua Intellectuals, Franciscan Scholars,” “Letras clandestinas, textos tolerados. Colaboraciones lícitas: la producción textual de los intelectuales nahuas y zapotecos en el siglo XVI,” in *Elites intelectuales y modelos colectivos. Mundo ibérico (siglos XVI-XIX)*, eds. Mónica Quijada and Jesús Bustamante, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas- Instituto de Historia de América, 2002), 59-82. From the same author, see “La idolatría letrada; un análisis comparativo de textos clandestinos rituales y devocionales en comunidades nahuas y zapotecas, 1613-1654,” *Historia Mexicana* 49, Núm. 2 (octubre-diciembre, 1999): 197-252.

¹⁵⁹ Silver Moon, “The Imperial College of Tlatelolco,” 359.

Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, in Mexico City, who collaborated with him in the production of the *Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España*. The central hypothesis in her work is to focus on the role that former students of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* had in the process of writing the *Historia General* with Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. According to the author, the collaboration that Nahua intellectuals had in the process of co-authoring the work with Sahagún had been diminished by many previous scholars, who are mostly interested in what is mostly considered as Sahagún's independent work. This dissertation provides the names and backgrounds of most of the Nahua intellectuals who collaborated with Sahagún in his research on the Nahua culture. The second major contribution of this dissertation is the examination that the author did about the career of the Nahua students and how the education at the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* determined their social roles, indigenous spaces and their agendas, both inside and outside of the college. Also, this study demonstrates that the different backgrounds of these Nahua intellectuals deeply influenced the content of the *Historia General*, from its content, its historical perspective, the selection of topics treated and the information included in this volume.

Another important contribution about the study of indigenous intellectuals is the work of Kelly S. McDonough. Both in her dissertation¹⁶⁰ and later on in her published book entitled *The Learned Ones. Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico*¹⁶¹ she focused on the study of Nahua intellectualism, and considers that intellectual production among the Nahuas started long before the Spanish conquest, and that it continued until today. McDonough considers that the vibrant intellectual tradition among Nahua people was revitalized and transformed after the Spanish conquest due to the deep engagement that some Nahua intellectuals had with the written word. As she argues, the elaboration, production and interpretation of wisdom, as well as cultural, historical and political knowledge through writing defines the vitality and validity of these Nahua intellectuals over time. Based on this premise, McDonough reconstructs and traces the intellectual activity of diverse characters that better represent the diverse historical contexts through which Nahua intellectuals transitioned throughout the history of Mexico. Thus, McDonough revisited the works of people from different historical periods by starting with Antonio del Rincón, a Nahua grammarian educated under the sponsorship of the Franciscans during the sixteenth century; then on to reviewing the work of Faustino Chimalpopoca, a politician and professor during the period of the Second Mexican Empire in nineteenth-century Mexico; and ending with the review of the work made by Ildefonso Maya Hernández, a modern day Nahua educator, playwright, artist and activist. McDonough's analysis of the intellectual work produced by different Nahua intellectuals aims to demonstrate their dynamism by being able to adapt themselves to their historical circumstances in order to preserve their knowledge and traditions, which includes their ability to speak other languages besides their maternal one, and being able to write either in Spanish or in other languages. According to the author, it was

¹⁶⁰ Kelly S. McDonough, "Indigenous Experience in Mexico: Readings in the Nahua Intellectual Tradition" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2010).

¹⁶¹ See Kelly S. McDonough, *The Learned Ones. Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

indeed this dynamism and the ability that these Nahua intellectuals had to adapt themselves to harsh conditions that made of this intellectual tradition something that still prevails among Nahua communities. The collaboration of two Nahua intellectuals in this book demonstrates the capacity of analysis and critical thinking that they had towards their own intellectual tradition.

Most recently, Gabriela Ramos and Yana Yannakakis in their 2014 work entitled *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes*, offered a more broadly focused view about indigenous intellectualism in some regions of Latin America, essentially the Andean region and New Spain, by comparing and contrasting the patterns and characteristics that intellectual development among Indigenous Peoples experienced after the Spanish conquest and during the first centuries of colonization in the said regions.¹⁶² The contribution made by the authors who collaborate in this book offers a diversity of examples, cases and different interests that motivated indigenous intellectuals in the Spanish Americas to adopt literacy in order to continue with their intellectual production. By considering that the characteristics of the Spanish colonies varied from region to region and were based on the characteristics of the various pre-conquest societies, the authors who collaborate in this volume also present the features that indigenous intellectuals shared independently of their geographical and social differences, and illustrate how their positions as intellectuals allowed them to preserve their privileges within the colonial establishment. Since the geographical approach in this book is broad, the authors' and their collaborators definition of "indigenous intellectuals" apparently views in terms of equality that these Indigenous intellectuals were simply a type of *indios letrados*, which included the entire scope of all indigenous scholars, poets, fiscals, sacristans, scribes, and caciques. According to the contents of the various essays in this book, the main characteristic that these intellectuals shared in spite of their diverse background is the positions that they held as cultural mediators between the colonial reality and the indigenous one. This work again emphasizes the impact that literacy had in the shaping of indigenous intellectual communities. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that the contributors of this book stated that the indigenous intellectual tradition did not start with the adoption and learning of the alphabet after the process of the European colonization, instead, the collaborators agree that literacy both after and during colonial times demonstrated that indigenous societies in the Americas were well familiarized with literacy and the Mesoamerican practice of graphic pluralism.

Nevertheless, studies of indigenous intellectualism are not reduced mainly to the Mesoamerican and Andean traditions. The studies conducted on this topic among North American indigenous communities, however, also have the tendency to focus on indigenous intellectuals who existed during the last decades of the nineteenth century and currently in North America. This is probably due to some basic shared characteristics in the history experienced by

¹⁶² See Gabriela Ramos and Yana Yannakakis, *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

both the United States and the Native American population during this period of time: particularly with the removal policies issued by the government of the United States during the nineteenth century which threatened and endangered the survival of several Native American groups, as well as the shaping of American nationalism, and the adoption of literacy among some Native American groups all of which are highly considered by scholars who study Native American intellectualism.

Consequently, one of the works written on this topic is the study of James W. Parins, *Literacy and Intellectual Life in the Cherokee Nation, 1820-1906*,¹⁶³ which offered a perspective about the intellectual independence that the Cherokee Nation obtained not only through literacy and the ability that some Cherokees had to develop a means of writing and translating from English into Cherokee, but also by the creation of their own alphabet. The creation of the Cherokee syllabary by Sequoyah around 1820 provided the Cherokee people not only intellectual independence, but it also allowed them to have more control over their affairs and to have access to spheres of power that were mostly restricted to Anglo-Saxons. The use of the syllabary also not only allowed the Cherokee people to express their ideas in their own language, but also to record sacred texts which helped them to preserve their heritage, religion and social cohesion during the harsh periods of Cherokee history.

These studies on indigenous intellectuals which have recently flourished have also specially focused on the role that modern day indigenous intellectuals had in countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. In most of these studies, the research of different scholars focuses on the importance and impact that indigenous intellectuals had in their communities, mostly as activists, political leaders and cultural figures. However, the focus on this research is not limited solely to those topics since these modern intellectuals centered their efforts on dealing with current racism, discrimination, education, bilingualism, and advancing their struggle for Indigenous Peoples' incorporation as participants in modern democracy by speaking out against genocide and violence, as well as trying to focus their work on gender issues, or towards strengthening the Pan-Indigenous movement in the Americas.¹⁶⁴

In the case of Mexico, there is an increasing interest from scholars of diverse disciplines on analyzing the process of empowerment that Indigenous People have acquired throughout history, and their specific struggles for being adequately represented by the corresponding authorities before official institutions in charge of "indigenous development." The works of Natividad Gutiérrez Chong and Gloria Alicia Caudillo are some of the examples that illustrate the interest that exists among scholars for having and constructing a scholarly approach to

¹⁶³ James W. Parins, *Literacy and Intellectual life in the Cherokee Nation, 1820-1906* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 276.

¹⁶⁴ Martina Masaquiza and Pakal B'alam, "A Pan-Indigenous Vision of Indigenous Studies," *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal* 1, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 3-9, 6.

indigenous intellectualism in modern-day Mexico. The main topics analyzed in these types of studies are the construction of indigenous identities in Mexico and its contrast with the policy of unilateral nationalism constantly promoted through public education and other means in modern states.¹⁶⁵

However, even considering the recent interest of academia to focus on the study and analysis of indigenous intellectualism in the Americas, it is evident that the study of indigenous intellectuals in nineteenth-century Mexico needs more specific attention. In her book, Kelly S. McDonough presents the historical analysis of the figure of one Nahua intellectual from nineteenth century Mexico: Faustino Chimalpopoca Galicia. Although she offers a very insightful glimpse about the historical situation that Nahua intellectuals experienced during the period of the French Intervention in Mexico, I consider important to analyze more in depth how other Nahua intellectuals experienced and lived some of the most turbulent periods in Mexican history, which is the nineteenth century and the fall of the colonial establishment.

In this sense, the present studies' review, reading and understanding of the primary sources written by Indigenous Peoples, both in the Nahuatl language and/or in Spanish, is fundamental to achieving a more complete understanding of the nineteenth-century Nahua Intellectual experience. Before further advancing the hypothesis about the longevity and validity of the existence of an indigenous intellectual tradition in Mexico it is important to review its main historical characteristics by tracing it through its origins in pre-conquest Mesoamerica.

2.8 Conclusion to Chapter 2

As we have seen, the appropriate definition of the term “indigenous intellectuals” is still developing in the area of history for studying the intellectual phenomenon of Indigenous Peoples in early nineteenth-century Latin America.¹⁶⁶ In the case of the history of Mexico, there are a few scholarly works that have already pointed out the importance of considering several indigenous' works as intellectual production.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, the term “intellectual” has not been widely used in scholarly works pertaining to the study of indigenous intellectuals, which could derive from diverse factors, most probably because of the westernized connotations that the term “intellectual” holds, or the colonial perspective that prevailed in many current approaches to the topic. Nevertheless, as we have seen here, there are important advances towards the recognition and study of indigenous intellectuality which have contributed to the process of understanding this activity from a non-traditional perspective.

¹⁶⁵ Norma Molina Fuentes, “Inserción laboral en espacios académicos de intelectuales indígenas en México. Exbecarios del International Fellowship Program,” *Revista Ibero-americana de Educação/Revista de Educación* 72, núm. 1(15/09/2016): 69-88, 72-74.

¹⁶⁶ See Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis, *Indigenous Intellectuals*.

¹⁶⁷ See Tavárez, “Nahua Intellectuals, Franciscan Scholars,” and McDonough, *The Learned Ones*.

Current scholars have studied indigenous intellectuality in Mexico, especially the intellectual work created by Indigenous Peoples during the colonial era in New Spain. Similarly, there is also a relatively new historiographical interest in analyzing Mesoamerican cultural production as intellectual works. Regardless of the important contribution that several of these studies have presented in the field of history, early nineteenth-century indigenous intellectuals still receive little attention from current scholars. This neglect of the study of nineteenth century indigenous intellectuality must be the result of several factors; one of them is probably because of the break or abrupt change in the political and social system that Mexican independence brought to the colonial system. Also, under the Spanish colonial regime in New Spain both ecclesiastical and educational institutions maintained a certain stability that allowed them to both produce and preserve an important quantity of documents that permits current scholars to successfully trace primary sources of their interest. On the contrary, nineteenth-century Mexico is characterized by the dramatic change that former colonial institutions endured, and consequently, the organization of their archives also suffered from the calamities of the early independence period. The constant changing social status of Indigenous Peoples during this period also represents a difficulty for the study of nineteenth-century intellectuals in Mexico due to the constant transformation of governmental institutions and their jurisdictions. Additionally, the convulsive period from 1820 to 1890, when several armed rebellions as well as foreign interventions occurred in Mexico, makes it further difficult for scholars to locate and uncover pertinent archival material for the study of the actions of Indigenous Peoples.

The particularities of this historical period are marked by structural changes that influenced both the intellectual and social shaping of the last generation of Indigenous People from Mexico City who had access to education under the Spanish colonial administration. That is why I propose to identify the members of this group as the “rupture generation.” As we have seen above, according to scholarly material regarding the study of generations, the transmission and reception of a group’s memory, identity, and knowledge from one to another determines the construction of a generation. This generation of early nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals in Mexico City transformed the mechanisms of transmission and recollection of their collective memory, as well as the manner in which they performed and disseminated their collective knowledge, according to the social circumstances of their historical context.

Although there remained a continuous phenomenon of transmission and persistence of identity between the early nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals and their eighteenth-century predecessors, the means of this transmission developed along substantially different forms.¹⁶⁸ This phenomenon of transformation resulted in changing the way that this early nineteenth-century generation worked, allowing them to serve as mediators between individuals from their social group while at the same time conserving their own collective memory as members of a

¹⁶⁸ See Monika Palmberger, *How Generations Remember: Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Vienna-London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 6-40.

specific group. Consequently, early nineteenth-century indigenous intellectuals' works have their own characteristics due to their social background, level of education and accessibility to the means for expressing their ideas. Considering these previous elements, this present research will allow me to appreciate the phenomenon of indigenous intellectualism as a variable and heterogeneous activity that must be carefully studied according to their Mesoamerican traditions, as well as their own contemporary and regional aspects.