

# Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies

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WHAT THE SPANISH COLONIAL PERIOD added to pre-Columbian America can be described briefly as the contents of two complementary master institutions, the Spanish city and the great estate. Historians have now begun to penetrate deeply into these subjects, and soon it will be possible to deal with Spanish American colonial history from its vital center rather than from its surface or periphery. While the colonial city is the less well explored of the two themes, its study can proceed on a firm footing, since the continuity of location, function, and even formal organization must be evident to all. Understanding the great estate has proved more difficult, for the estate had a greater diversity of forms and changed more than the city, both in law and in substance. The most serious problem, not always recognized as such, has been the apparent lack of connection between the encomienda of the Conquest period and the hacienda of the mature colony.

Earlier in this century some scholars assumed, quite logically, that the encomienda must have evolved directly into the hacienda. The restricted rights of the encomendero were thought to have become gradually confused with land possession through some process never revealed in detail. Then in a series of publications written mainly during the 1930s, Silvio Zavala and Lesley B. Simpson proved to general satisfaction that this identification was false.<sup>1</sup> The encomienda had no juridical connection with land, and as time passed, it grew weaker rather than stronger, until, in Mexico at least, it was little more than an annuity.

Most historians today would no doubt agree that there is some sort of equivalence between encomienda and hacienda, as well as a

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<sup>1</sup> Silvio Zavala, *La encomienda indiana* (Madrid, 1935), and *De encomiendas y propiedad territorial en algunas regiones de la América española* (México, 1940); Lesley B. Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain: The Beginning of Spanish Mexico* (Berkeley, 1966), and *Studies in the Administration of the Indians of New Spain* (4 vols., Berkeley, 1934-40).

certain temporal correlation in that one declined as the other emerged. But after the massive and successful drive to establish the *encomienda's* juridical history, scholarly opinion has tended to insist more on the separation than on the connection. Charles Gibson made a fair assessment in saying that "the two histories are now regarded as distinct."<sup>2</sup>

Before going on, it may be of interest to consider why scholars have so readily tolerated a gap breaking one of the major continuities of Spanish American development. A large part of the reason is that, until all too recently, the top item on the research agenda was to define the legal framework of the Spanish empire. Men concerned with the subtleties of legal concepts and procedures felt little inclination to pursue any continuity between a governmental, tribute-collecting institution, the *encomienda*, and a private, land-owning institution like the *hacienda*.<sup>3</sup>

In the period since World War II historians of Spanish America have gone beyond legalism, but rather than stepping directly onto the firm ground of social and economic reality, they have often leaped past it to statistical research and highly categorical or topical analysis. For the great estate the favorite categories have been land and labor. Unfortunately it is not much easier to see the continuity between *encomienda* and *hacienda* from the viewpoint of land and labor studies than from that of pure legalism. What could be the connection between a landless institution and one based squarely on the legal ownership of large tracts? Where was the continuity between an institution which procured shifting labor by virtue of a governmental

<sup>2</sup> *Spain in America* (New York, 1966), 118, n. 12.

<sup>3</sup> It is no accident that the now discredited thesis of the essential identity between the two institutions was upheld most strongly by scholars in less legally oriented disciplines, like the geographer George M. McBride in *The Land Systems of Mexico* (New York, 1923), 43-45, or by such Latin American historians (principally Bailey W. Diffie) as were interested mainly in social and economic matters. Some geographers remain unimpressed by the notion of the landless *encomienda* to this day. In his article "The Peruvian City of the Sixteenth Century," in *The Urban Explosion in Latin America; a Continent in the Process of Modernization*, ed. by Glenn H. Beyer (Ithaca, 1967), 33-56, Ralph A. Gakenheimer fully equates the *encomienda* with landholding, apparently unaware of the tempests which the issue has stirred up among historians. Diffie in his *Latin American Civilization, Colonial Period* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1945), 62-67, was the last major North American historian to support the McBride position of a gradual merging of *encomienda* into *hacienda*. In the introduction to a reprint of the same work (New York, 1967), xxvi, he abandons this view while still maintaining that the *encomienda* at least facilitated control over land by Spaniards.

grant and one which depended very largely, it was thought, on a permanent force of debt peons?<sup>4</sup>

A final basic factor inhibiting work on the continuous history of the great estate has been lack of knowledge about the encomienda as a functioning institution, for scholarship was long forced to rely almost exclusively on legislative and other indirect sources. The veterans of encomienda studies were themselves perfectly aware of the problem. Simpson specified that the lack of records concerning the actual operation of an encomienda in the early period was a source of uncertainty.<sup>5</sup> Lewis Hanke once devoted two whole pages of eloquent prose to the absence of "the intimate and varied source materials needed for a real history of the encomienda system," and urged caution on those who would draw firm conclusions about the institution.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years better sources have indeed come to light, and scholars have begun to interpret the new information. Notarial records are proving to be an excellent if incomplete means of exploring the manifold economic activities of encomenderos and their subordinates in the crucial central areas of Mexico and Peru.<sup>7</sup> Much can be learned about landholding aspects of the encomienda through painstaking research with land titles in a restricted locality.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> As an aside it will bear mention that the doctrine of the separate encomienda and hacienda has never achieved quite the orthodoxy among scholars in Spanish America that it now enjoys here. There are at least two good reasons. First, the Spanish Americans have a broader conception of the agrarian problem, including in it social, cultural, and other elements. Second, the detailed demonstration of the sad juridical destiny of the encomienda applies in all its rigor only to central Mexico (an area, as it now seems, where the weakening of the encomienda occurred sooner and more evenly than in any other major region). As recently as 1965 Juan Friede, certainly no stranger to the work of Zavala and Simpson, published an article defending in its pure form the older notion that the encomienda gradually became confused with property rights. He even mentions (without specific sources) late sixteenth-century encomienda titles that included lands, waters, and forests. "Proceso de formación de la propiedad territorial en la América intertropical," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, II (1965), 82. The article's main frame of reference is New Granada. For Chile Mario Góngora accepts the landless nature of the encomienda in the strictest juridical sense, but indicates a link with land-owning at the level of local legal practice. Jean Borde and Mario Góngora, *Evolución de la propiedad rural en el Valle del Puangue* (Santiago de Chile, 1956), 29. The sections on the colonial period are by Góngora.

<sup>5</sup> *The Encomienda in New Spain*, xiii.

<sup>6</sup> *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (Philadelphia, 1949), 84-85.

<sup>7</sup> José Miranda, *La función económica del encomendero en los orígenes del régimen colonial. Nueva España (1525-1531)* (2nd ed., México, 1965); James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison, 1968), 11-33, 206 and *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Borde and Góngora, *Evolución de la propiedad*; partial use of this technique

The postwar years have also brought a more complete, realistic, and articulated picture of the hacienda, yielding new points of comparability with the *encomienda*. François Chevalier's now classic description of the Mexican hacienda provided the first adequate social view of the institution; more recently Charles Gibson in *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule* modified the stereotype of debt peonage and showed that in the Valley of Mexico haciendas operated even during the late colonial period with a relatively limited skeleton crew outnumbered by temporary or seasonal help coming from the Indian villages.<sup>9</sup>

The main purpose of the present paper is to bring the separate histories of *encomienda* and hacienda into some connection with each other. Such an undertaking means advancing a bit beyond previous interpretations. It does not require rejection of the juridical history established by Zavala and others, however, since the continuities to be observed here are mainly social and economic in nature. Only one aspect of the legal history of the *encomienda* seems to call for comment. Both Zavala and Simpson recognized that in practice *encomenderos* could own land, but they tended to give the impression that there was literally *no* juridical link between the *encomienda* and landholding.

Nevertheless, aside from *de facto* patterns, there was a certain indirect legal connection which can be demonstrated from the *encomienda* titles themselves. North American scholars have generally accepted Simpson's interpretation that from the inception of the *encomienda* in the Antilles it was first of all a grant of the right to collect tributes, however prominent a feature labor use may have been.<sup>10</sup> Yet Zavala's more detailed treatment of the institution's development shows that the original *encomienda* or *repartimiento* of the Antilles was a grant of the right to use labor, with no initial link to royal tribute in fact or theory.<sup>11</sup> It was only in the course of a long legislative and administrative campaign that the Crown and its officials succeeded first in adding the tribute idea to labor use, and

is to be found also in Orlando Fals Borda, *Campeños de los Andes: estudio sociológico de Saucio* (Bogotá, 1961).

<sup>9</sup> François Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda* (Berkeley, 1963); Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, 1964). Borde and Góngora's *Evolución de la propiedad* deserves mention for its portrait of the hacienda as well as for its land-title research. Góngora's *Origen de los "inquilinos" de Chile central* (Santiago de Chile, 1960) is also invaluable.

<sup>10</sup> See for example *The Encomienda in New Spain*, xiii and 8.

<sup>11</sup> *La encomienda indiana*, 2.

later in restricting the encomendero's rights to the enjoyment of tributes alone.

Actually there were two strands of institutional development, perceptibly distinct even though always intertwined. On the one hand, there was the "encomienda," created by high officials. This was a governmental office similar to the encomienda of the Spanish military orders, strictly limited in tenure, and essentially conceived as a concession of the right to collect and enjoy the king's tribute. On the other hand, there was the locally-inspired "repartimiento," stemming from the original ad hoc division made in Hispaniola by Columbus, and spreading to other areas through a process of diffusion at the local level. This was a much more amorphous institution, without much framework of legal theory, but basically concerned with labor use.

Even in legal format, the arrangements existing in Mexico and Peru during the Conquest period owed more to the repartimiento of the Antilles than to the official conception of the encomienda. The word "repartimiento" triumphed in both popular and official usage to designate the actual geographical area of the grant.<sup>12</sup> The titles of encomiendas in the period before the New Laws do not emphasize tribute; in fact, they hardly ever mention that word. (The title forming the frontispiece of Simpson's *Encomienda in New Spain*, granted in Yucatán in 1544, is no exception.) What was assigned, to take the documents literally, was not tribute but Indians, who were to work on the encomendero's properties, his haciendas and granjerías;

<sup>12</sup> F. A. Kirkpatrick in his article "Repartimiento-Encomienda," in *HAHR*, XIX (1939), 372-379, maintained that aside from its other recognized senses, the word "repartimiento" should be acknowledged as a synonym of "encomienda," not only for the Antillean period, but on up to the time of Solórzano and the *Recopilación*. The point is a valuable one, if only to make scholars aware to what extent our notion of "encomienda" is an ideal construct. The two words were not strictly synonymous, however, and to delve a bit deeper into contemporary usage may be revealing. The term "encomienda" was very little used in the Spanish Indies in the sixteenth century; it referred to the institution in the general sense, "the encomienda," and it occurred in set legal phrases, such as to have or receive Indians "in encomienda." But when we speak today of "an encomienda," we are using the word as contemporaries rarely did. This sense was rendered almost always by "repartimiento," even in such legalistic writings as Juan de Matienzo's *Gobierno del Perú* (Paris and Lima, 1967). The popularity of the term "repartimiento" among the Spaniards of the Indies certainly must have been related to the word's connotations of labor use and territoriality. It is similarly significant that the crown preferred "encomienda," and that this term became more prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the legal institution lost its "repartimiento" attributes. The term "encomendero," unlike "encomienda," came into instant and universal use upon its introduction in the Antilles. To the status-obsessed Spaniards the word smacked of a noble title, very reminiscent of the title "comendador" in the military orders, with which indeed it was sometimes confused.

in Peru as in the Antilles, mines were often mentioned as well.<sup>13</sup> If the titles are accepted at face value, then, the standard *encomienda* of the Conquest period was not in itself a grant of property, nor did it provide a specific legal vehicle for property acquisition. But it was addressed to a man presumed to be a property owner, who could otherwise take little advantage of the grant in its own terms. Góngora shows that in Chile *encomenderos* cited their official position as justification for receiving grants of land (*mercedes*) within the limits of their *encomiendas*, and even for preventing such concessions to others in the area.<sup>14</sup>

Still, legal connections between landowning and the *encomienda* remain tenuous. A far more significant link is to be found in the realm of actual practice, though the present state of research prevents its thorough analysis. One can say with some assurance that during the Conquest period *encomenderos* in all the major regions of the Spanish Indies regularly owned land as private individuals and that many of their holdings were inside the limits of their own *encomiendas*.<sup>15</sup> When the nature and extent of these holdings are understood in detail and in time depth, someone can begin to write the systematic institutional history of the Spanish American great estate. For the present, only provisional conclusions can be drawn about any actual derivation of individual haciendas from individual *encomiendas*.

The state of knowledge concerning landholding as a *de facto* aspect of the *encomienda* has already been very well outlined by Silvio Zavala. In his *De encomiendas y propiedad territorial . . .* he demonstrated a drastic legal separation of *encomienda* and landowning. Nevertheless, the course of his argument required him to adduce several cases of land use and ownership by *encomenderos*. Shortly thereafter, in carrying out a study on the institutional history of Guatemala, he unearthed documents proving that the heirs of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, while *encomenderos* of San Juan Chaloma, had gradually built up an hacienda there through land grants and purchases from Indians. This was evidence, Zavala said, of the "sustained tendency of the *encomendero's* family to convert itself—by specific

<sup>13</sup> Representative titles are quoted in Zavala, *La encomienda indiana*, 294-309, and in *The Harkness Collection in the Library of Congress. Documents from Early Peru, the Pizarros and the Almagros, 1531-1578* (Washington, 1936), 168-170.

<sup>14</sup> Borde and Góngora, *Evolución de la propiedad*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> This is the common conclusion of the works by Miranda, Góngora, and Lockhart cited in notes 9 and 10. See also Silvio Zavala, *De encomiendas y propiedad territorial*, 22-23 and 85, and *Contribución a la historia de las instituciones coloniales en Guatemala* (México, 1945), 56.

entitlement distinct from the encomienda title proper, that is, by land grant (*merced*) or purchase—into the proprietor of lands contained within the jurisdiction of the encomienda towns. Thus an hacienda would be born under the cloak of the encomienda, though independent as to juridical title.” The encomendero could “create an hacienda within the encomienda.”

One type of information is lacking now as in 1945, when Zavala wrote. This is the relative frequency with which this phenomenon occurred. Zavala pointed to the only conceivable method of finding out. It could be done, he said, at least for certain regions of the Indies, “on the basis of a scrupulous comparison of encomienda titles with titles supporting territorial property in the same region, inquiring at the same time into kinship between the families of the encomenderos and those of the hacendados.”<sup>16</sup>

In its inherent significance Zavala’s analysis of this subject is at least as weighty as his voluminous work on the legal history of the encomienda. Buried as it is in a minor publication on a different subject, however, it has been little noted, and historians have not followed his prescription for further research. Only one work of high scholarly standards attempts to trace a detailed account of landowning in a restricted area from the conquest period to independence and beyond—Jean Borde and Mario Góngora’s *Evolución de la propiedad rural en el Valle del Puangué*. While estimable and indeed epoch-making, this book does not represent quite the type of research that Zavala envisioned. First, though there are precious bits of information and analysis, systematic investigation of the encomienda is lacking. Moreover, its authors make no attempt to go deep into family histories and interrelationships. Such research will demand a concentrated, special effort to master an enormous amount of detail. Góngora finds that some encomiendas in the valley studied gave rise to haciendas in Zavala’s sense, and others did not. Of exceeding interest for the present paper, however, is the fact that the family of the valley’s greatest encomendero, starting in the first generation, built up a large hacienda in the valley center, the only one in the whole region to maintain the same ownership through the entire colonial period.<sup>17</sup>

Aside from this, relevant information must be sought mainly in works basically concerned with other themes. Chevalier’s study is not systematic at the local level, and he is much more interested in

<sup>16</sup> *Contribución*, 58-61.

<sup>17</sup> Borde and Góngora, *Evolución de la propiedad rural*, 43, 60, 224.

haciendas and sugar plantations than in the encomienda. He gives some examples of encomendero families who came to own great properties near their encomiendas in central Mexico, but retreats from any pronouncement on trends, since there were many other haciendas not traceable to that origin.<sup>18</sup> Gibson in his *Aztecs* demonstrates that some used the encomienda as an opportunity to acquire land, and he gives the names of several encomenderos who became property owners. But he also believes that there were many other modes of land acquisition.<sup>19</sup>

Elsewhere the findings are also suggestive but fragmentary. Orlando Fals Borda's local study of a highland community in Colombia, while oriented towards Indians, does show that the original encomendero of the region not only acquired a large property that became one of the area's most "aristocratic" haciendas, but even gave it the name (*Aposentos*) under which it continued to be known until today.<sup>20</sup> For Yucatán, Arnold Strickon asserts that when encomiendas were finally abolished in the eighteenth century, the encomenderos tended to buy up the core area of their former grants, the *planta*, where the headquarters of the developing hacienda was located.<sup>21</sup>

From these examples a pattern seems to emerge. In most regions there came to be considerably more haciendas than there had been encomiendas.<sup>22</sup> As the Spanish sector expanded and more families grew rich and powerful, non-encomenderos managed to acquire large tracts of land in areas originally dominated by encomenderos. But in a typical case, if there be such a thing, the oldest, stablest, most prestigious, and best-located hacienda would have stemmed from the landholdings of the original encomendero and his family. Research that could establish the general validity of such a pattern, however, would require years and the effort of many men. And even when accomplished it would probably not reveal the heart of the matter. Unless it went far beyond land titles, it could only demonstrate a certain genealogical relationship, and we can be almost certain that even

<sup>18</sup> *Land and Society*, 93, 97, 119-122.

<sup>19</sup> *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 275.

<sup>20</sup> *Campesinos de los Andes*, 14, 111-112, 130, 132. The founder of Aposentos was the original encomendero in effect, since his single predecessor left the Bogotá region immediately after the first conquest, without ever taking possession of the encomienda.

<sup>21</sup> "Hacienda and Plantation in Yucatan. An Historical-Ecological Consideration of the Folk-Urban Continuum in Yucatan," *América Indígena*, XXV (1965), 44.

<sup>22</sup> Gibson estimates some 160 haciendas for the Valley of Mexico in the late colonial period, as opposed to about 30 encomiendas in the years after the conquest (*The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 61, 289).



this relationship did not exist in many regions, especially in the thinly-settled cattle areas where the encomienda was weak or absent.

Legal history yields few links between these two institutions, which dominated the Spanish American countryside, while any actual line of descent cannot yet be traced in detail. Accordingly, the only means available to establish the connection is a phenomenological comparison of the two. This in itself could never prove—nor is it meant to prove—that the hacienda arose out of the encomienda, but it can show that the change was far less than a transformation. The comparison, to be just and fruitful, must range broadly over associated practices and structures which, one could maintain, were not a part of the institutions proper. This procedure is necessary because the true comparability exists at the level of *de facto* practice, social organization, and broader functions. Neither encomienda nor hacienda ever found adequate legal expression of its full impact on society.

First of all, we may compare the two institutions as to proprietorship.<sup>23</sup> It will be immediately apparent that the encomendero and the later hacendado were cut from the same cloth; they were patriarchs of a special kind who ruled both the countryside and the city. Following both custom and law, the encomendero lived and maintained a house in the city to whose jurisdiction his encomienda belonged. Similarly the hacendado, while not a full-time urban resident in most cases, kept a large town house and held citizenship in the nearest city. The urban role played by both types expressed itself in the domination of the municipal council. In the Conquest period, the councils of most cities consisted exclusively of encomenderos. The later hacendados never achieved such a complete monopoly of urban office, since miners in some places and merchants in others were also council members, but nevertheless the dominance of the hacendado over municipal councils was the norm.

Each institution in its time was a family possession, the main

<sup>23</sup> The treatment that follows is so generalized that specific footnoting seems inappropriate. The terms of the comparison are drawn from the descriptions of the encomienda and hacienda referred to in footnotes 9 to 11. Particularly important for the hacienda is the material in Chevalier, *Land and Society*, 230-231, 268-307. The whole comparison applies primarily to regions of sedentary Indian settlement. It holds above all for the former centers of Indian civilization, Peru and Mexico, and with slightly diminished force for adjacent regions such as Colombia, Chile, or Guatemala. In fringe areas like Paraguay or Venezuela, the encomienda assumed a great variety of forms, though it appears to the author that these various arrangements were in each case as close an approach to the classic estate form as conditions permitted, with some residual influence of the tradition of *rescate*, a mixture of trade and booty.

resource of a numerous clan. Each gave rise to many entails; but, with or without legal devices of perpetuation, each had a strong tendency to remain in the family. As the effective heads of society, both *encomenderos* and *hacendados* felt themselves to be an aristocracy whatever their origins and negotiated for honors and titles from the king, particularly coats of arms and membership in Spain's military orders.

The balance between country and city shifted considerably from *encomendero* to *hacendado*. The *encomendero* stayed ordinarily in his city residence, as luxurious as he could afford to make it, and went to his *encomienda* as rarely as once a year on a trip which combined a pleasant country excursion and a tour of inspection at tribute-collecting time. He did not have a house for himself on the *encomienda*, though he would often build or preempt structures there to house his subordinates and to store products. In contrast, the typical *hacienda* had an impressive country house as one of its outstanding features. Yet though some *hacienda* houses were like palaces, at least as many were fortress-warehouses, massive and utilitarian compared to the *hacendado's* town house with its carved balconies and fountains.

The *hacendado* and his family could be counted on to live in town as much as possible. On occasion, for example in the depressed seventeenth century, an *hacendado* might not be able to afford the heavy expenses of ostentatious town living, and would sit out many months of involuntary exile in the country. But when times were good, he would live mainly in the city and travel out to the *hacienda* for one good long vacation and inspection tour, much like the *encomendero*. Both types were rural-urban, with their economic base in the country and their social ties in the city. Only the balance between the two poles changed, corresponding to the slow and uneven movement of Spaniards and Spanish life out into the countryside through the course of the colonial period.

What one might call the staff of the two institutions was nearly identical. Both *encomendero* and *hacendado* had large collections of relatives, friends, and guests who partly lived on the bounty of the patron, partly worked for him. More specifically, both *encomendero* and *hacendado* had in their hire a steward called a *majordomo*, who took over nearly all the practical management of the estate. The man in this post would be well educated and would enjoy reasonably high standing in the Spanish world; yet he remained socially subordinate to the employer. Like his master the steward was urban-oriented;

he was at home in the city markets, where he borrowed money, bought supplies, and sold the estate's produce.

On the encomienda, or at least on large encomiendas, there were beneath the majordomo a number of combined tribute-collectors, labor foremen, and stock-watchers, often called *estancieros*.<sup>24</sup> Though their function was of considerable importance, their status was the lowest possible within the Spanish sphere. Typically they originated in the humblest strata of Spanish peninsular society or came out of marginal groups such as sailors, foreigners, or Negroes. The later hacienda had exactly the same kind of low-level supervisory personnel, sometimes still called *estancieros*—which significantly was the first word for cowboys on cattle haciendas. They still came from the same social strata, belonging to the Spanish world, but at the very fringes of it. By this time, mestizos were commonly found in such work, along with Negroes, mulattoes, and poor Spaniards, but their relationship to Spanish society as a whole was precisely that of the earlier *estancieros*. These people lived more in the country than in the city, though often against their preference. In any case, they spoke Spanish, rode horses, used Spanish weapons, implements, and techniques, and thus constituted a Spanish-urban extension into the countryside, taking their norms from the cities.

At the lowest level, raw labor in both cases was done by Indians or near-Indians, divided into two distinct worker types, as will be seen shortly. We must also take into account the ecclesiastical personnel of the great estate. Each encomienda was supposed to have

“‘*Estanciero*’ clearly derives from *estancia*. On the face of it, this would seem to constitute a linguistic proof of the intertwining of tribute collection, labor use, and land exploitation in the encomienda, since ‘*estancia*’ was the most commonly used word all over the Indies in the Conquest period for private holdings whether devoted to livestock or crops. If the encomienda’s tribute collectors were named after their agricultural functions, that would be a very strong indication that such functions were seen as an important regular feature of the encomienda in practice. The present writer believes that such an interpretation is essentially justified, but there are two factors tending to obscure it. First, ‘*estancia*’ had another meaning, particularly well established for Mexico by Gibson (*The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 33 and 475, n. 13). In this sense it designated an area where a small group of Indians lived remote from the main group. *Estancieros* would often be found in such places, so that this sense of ‘*estancia*’ could have influenced, or conceivably have been the real origin of their name. Both meanings of ‘*estancia*’ go back to the Antillean period, and examples can be found in the Laws of Burgos (see Simpson, *Studies in the Administration of the Indians*, I, 4, 23). Second, ‘*estanciero*’ was not the only word applied to the lowest employees of *encomenderos*. They could be called simply *majordomos* like the head stewards, and in Mexico they often went by the name of *calpisque*, after the Aztec tribute collectors. A third alternative name, *capataz*, had the strongest agricultural connotations of all, but was quite rare.

its doctrinero to minister to the Indians, and this person would also serve as the encomendero's private chaplain. The priest present on the larger haciendas duplicated these functions.

In one aspect it would be natural to expect a thorough transformation—in the evolution from public to private, from a semi-governmental office to an agricultural enterprise. Here too, however, a great deal of continuity can be observed. On the governmental side, encomenderos had the nominal paternalistic duties of protecting and instructing their Indians. Although their post was not supposed to entail true jurisdiction, it is clear that they did in fact rule over these Indians during the early period, openly calling themselves their *señores* or lords. Hacendados, as mere property owners, lacked any legal justification whatever for such a role; yet they too achieved it in practice. As recognition of their power, the authorities would often give them positions such as captain of the militia or alcalde mayor, and they would exercise formal jurisdiction as well. Both encomenderos and hacendados envisioned themselves as lords with retainers and vassals.

Even on the economic side, in the evolution toward a private agricultural enterprise, there was no lack of common elements in encomienda and hacienda practice. On the encomienda traditional, unsupervised Indian production ordinarily had primacy, but the encomendero would regularly go on to take possession of land, often on or near his encomienda. (Usually, but by no means always, he received a formal land grant from the town council or the governor.) On these holdings, most commonly called estancias,<sup>25</sup> he would raise crops and livestock for his own establishment and for sale in town markets or mining camps.

Of great importance in the agricultural labor force of the estancias were Indians falling outside the legal framework of the encomienda. Almost everywhere certain Indians soon came to be attached personally to individual Spaniards, who might or might not be encomenderos; in the circum-Caribbean region these Indians were called naborías, and in Peru yanaconas. Indians of this type, plus some Negro and Indian slaves, formed a permanent skeleton crew for the estancias, under the supervision of the estancieros. They were aided by a much more numerous force of encomienda Indians performing "tribute labor," particularly at times of maximum work load.<sup>26</sup> In

<sup>25</sup> In Peru and adjacent areas, often *chúcaras*.

<sup>26</sup> For the sake of clarity, the above presentation makes a clean distinction between estancia activity and unsupervised tribute producing. Actually a common practice was for the encomienda Indians to grow tribute products on certain

the case of Peru we know that the yanacunas of the Conquest period had the use of plots which they cultivated for their own sustenance.<sup>27</sup> From a very early time there were also non-encomenderos with much the same kind of estancias, though their position was rather precarious, and their possibilities were limited at first because of uncertain access to seasonal labor by encomienda Indians.

All of the above characteristics persisted into the hacienda period. We should not forget that our term "hacienda" is a scholarly convention; seventeenth-century Spanish Americans used "estancia" at least as often to designate a large landed property, retaining the earlier meaning of this word.<sup>28</sup> Ownership of land by Spaniards expanded greatly as the hacienda began to emerge, but the Indian villages still held much land. Even more important, the hacienda did not exploit all its vast holdings intensively; instead, certain restricted areas were cultivated under the direction of majordomos. To do this work the hacienda possessed a more substantial crew of permanent workers than the estancias of the Conquest period. (The workers' names at this time were "gañán" in Mexico and still "yanacuna" in Peru.) But they were still aided by a large seasonal influx of laborers from the independent Indian villages, impelled now by direct economic considerations rather than by encomienda obligation. Sometimes the villagers floated in and out according to their own and the hacienda's temporary needs, but in some places, as in Yucatán, they had a regularized obligation very reminiscent of earlier labor arrangements.

Both resident labor and nonresident labor, under both encomienda and hacienda, were still very close to pre-Columbian systems of periodic obligatory work. All types of workers performed something less than full-time duties, and obligations were usually reckoned by the household rather than by the individual. Also rooted in the pre-Columbian period were the so-called personal services which were so prominent a feature of the early encomienda. Most of these were inherited by the hacienda. This is especially clear for Peru, where in the twentieth century hacienda workers still delivered produce to town and provided rotating servants in the town house of the hacendado, as they once did for the encomendero.<sup>29</sup>

land set aside for the purpose, under as much or as little supervision as the majordomo saw fit to apply. There was no basic difference between this and an estancia.

<sup>27</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 26-27.

<sup>28</sup> Both Chevalier and Gibson give evidence for this, but see above all Borde and Góngora, *Evolución de la propiedad*, 58.

<sup>29</sup> Mario C. Vázquez, *Hacienda, peonaje y servidumbre en los Andes peruanos*

The renowned self-sufficiency of the hacienda was also anticipated in the Conquest period. Using their rights to Indian labor and produce as a base, encomenderos created networks of enterprises in almost all branches of economic activity that were locally profitable, though livestock and agriculture always occupied a prominent place. They did their best to make coherent economic units of these varied holdings, each part supplementing and balancing the others. The whole estate was under unified management, since the majordomos were responsible both for official encomienda activities and for enterprises of a more private nature, as were the estancieros at a lower level.

The tendency to build complete, diversified estates, then, was already observable at a time when the Spanish sector of the economy was generally booming under the influence of newly opened mines and the demand of the nascent Spanish towns for all kinds of supplies. This fact throws a new light on the self-sufficiency so characteristic of the later hacienda, which has often been explained very largely as a response to depressed conditions. Much the same type of structure appeared earlier in response to social and economic forces of quite a different kind. The vision of society which the Spaniards brought with them to America included a clear picture of the attributes of a great estate and its lord. Aside from his mansion and numerous servants, guests, and vassals, he must have land, cattle, and horses, and various agricultural enterprises from wheat farms to vegetable gardens. From the early Conquest period, this ideal constituted a fixed pattern of ambitions for successful Spaniards. First the encomenderos and then the hacendados exerted themselves to carry it out to the last detail, even where local conditions rendered it economically irrational.

But by and large the great estate scheme was economically rational as well as socially desirable. Everything the estates produced was wanted in the cities; taken together these products helped create a

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(Lima, 1961), 26-31. Beyond the bare statement that the main elements of the Spanish American estate were brought from Spain, the present article hardly touches on the question of antecedents, because both the Spanish estate and possible Indian forerunners are very incompletely studied. It is clear, here as in other facets of Spanish American life, that Spanish influence was concentrated in the upper and middle levels, Indian influence at the lowest, and that the Indian element was recessive. Often it is hard, when analysing any one trait, to make a clear decision on whether it is Spanish, Indian, or a coincidence of both. This is true even for something as distinctively Indian as the special services of the Incas, some of which were very close to practices on European estates.

Spanish as opposed to an Indian economy. The desire to assemble a complete set of varied holdings was not inconsistent with a thoroughly commercial orientation. Self-sufficiency is very hard to distinguish from the diversification or integration of a commercial enterprise, and the complete refusal to specialize, which may strike us today as amateurish, characterized not only the lords of estates, but colonial merchants as well. In an age of commercial rather than industrial capitalism, there was little thought of expansion and usually little justification for it. The constant effort of the most acute commercial minds was to monopolize, drive out competition, and sell at high prices to the severely limited market. The hacienda would carry the tendencies toward self-sufficiency and monopoly to their logical conclusion, without ever giving up a strong element of market orientation.

In fact, though inspired in part by social ambition, the hacendados' desire for lands which they would not exploit fully made very good economic sense. Monopolizing the land discouraged the rise of competitors in the immediate neighborhood. If the hacendado actually developed production on the whole vast expanse, however, he would have flooded the city market, as sometimes happened in any case. It seems probable that the size of urban markets and the amount of silver available were the real factors limiting hacienda production at any given time. The most market-oriented establishments in the Spanish Indies, the sugar plantations, still did not typically become specialized, but raised much of their own maize, wheat, and cattle. A drive toward self-sufficiency, diversification, or completeness—for the three cannot be separated—was a constant in Spanish colonial estates from the early sixteenth century onward.

All in all, the replacement of the encomienda by the hacienda involved only a shift in emphasis, whatever the factual details of institutional development. A semigovernmental domain, serving as the basis of a private economic unit, gave way to a private estate with many characteristics of a government. There was also a significant movement into the countryside, but both institutions stretched from the city into the country, and indeed their main function was to connect the two worlds. The estate ruled the countryside in the city's name; it brought country products to the city and the elements of Spanish culture and society to the country. After the city itself, the estate was the most powerful instrument of Hispanization in Spanish American culture. During the early period, when Indian structures were relatively intact and Spanish cities relatively small, the estate could emphasize government and tribute collection

over active supervision. As Indian structures deteriorated and the cities grew, supervision increased; the city came into the country.

The perspective here suggested makes it possible to treat the evolution of the great estate as one single line of development underneath the changing forms on the institutional surface. To judge from certain portions of their works, scholars like Zavala, Miranda, and Gibson have long had a good subjective understanding of this deep continuity, but they have never chosen to give it methodical expression. The standard works still tend to speak in terms of three successive systems: *encomienda*, *repartimiento*, and *hacienda*. The internal history of each system is worked out separate from the others; each new stage is seen as requiring a much greater transformation than was in fact the case.<sup>30</sup>

But looking beneath the level of formal institutions and administrative policy, the evolution could be expressed in simplest terms as follows. At all times there were private Spanish holdings in the countryside with workers attached to them, and these holdings always drew temporary labor from the Indian villages. From the Conquest period until the present century, the constant trend was for the Spanish properties and their permanent crews to grow, while the Indian villages and their lands and production shrank. It now begins to appear that Spanish agricultural enterprises, generally speaking, never achieved complete reliance on a resident working force during the colonial period. (Scholars familiar with conditions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries may have projected into the colonial period the solid, sedentary force of debt peons thought to characterize more recent times.) The villagers came to work on the *estancias* and later *haciendas*, first through *encomienda* obligations, then through the mechanism of the *repartimiento*,<sup>31</sup> and finally through individual arrangements, but they were always the same people doing the same things. In the Conquest period the greatest landowners were the *encomenderos*, whose *estancias* formed an integral if informal part of their estates. Yet from the very beginning there were other Spaniards with similar holdings, both small and large. *Encomendero* families or their legal successors seem often to have retained, consolidated, and even expanded their properties, which

<sup>30</sup> A notable exception is Gibson's treatment of the transition from *repartimiento* to *hacienda* in Mexico. *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 235-236.

<sup>31</sup> The viceroyalty of Peru, which had an exceptionally strong pre-Columbian tradition of obligatory rotary labor, and apparently suffered less population loss in highland regions, remained at this stage longer than Mexico. See John L. Phelan, *The Kingdom of Quito in the Seventeenth Century; Bureaucratic Politics in the Spanish Empire* (Madison, 1967), 60-65.



may have had a special aura of permanence and nobility. But the lands of the non-encomenderos increased even more, until the countryside contained several times the number of great estates present in the Conquest period. This development paralleled the great expansion of the Spanish or (broadly speaking) urban sector. The organization and social composition of those who owned and managed the estate hardly changed from the age of the encomienda to the hacienda of the eighteenth century.

Giving importance to these basic social and economic continuities does not require one to believe that the encomienda as an institution involved landholding, or that it evolved directly into the hacienda. As far as agriculture and landownership are concerned, the technical antecedent of the hacienda was the estancia rather than the encomienda. One may retain a narrowly legal definition of the encomienda as the right to enjoy labor and tribute and of the hacienda as pure landownership (though the latter interpretation is more rarely made). At the same time, it is quite possible to appreciate that the Spaniards tried to use each legal framework in turn as the basis of the same kind of great estate. Ideally this would have combined jurisdiction over vassals with vast possessions of land and stock. In the encomienda only the governmental aspect was formally expressed, and the rest was left to the spontaneous action of socio-economic ambitions and opportunities. The hacienda was just the opposite, giving legal status only to landownership and leaving the jurisdictional aspects to de facto patterns. This basic, essentially unitary social institution, the great estate, was quite fixed as to ideal attributes and social organization, and it maintained constant its function as intermediary between the growing Spanish towns and the receding Indian villages. It evolved along two simple lines—constant rise in the legal ownership of land and change in the balance of the labor force, as permanent workers increased and temporary workers decreased.

Let us view the great estate, therefore, as a basic social pattern with certain permanent attributes and a few recognized principles of evolution. By so doing, we can hope to understand the increasingly complex picture that is emerging as research proceeds to areas other than Mexico. Each region in the Spanish Indies seems to have produced a different form of the encomienda and a different timetable for its downfall. The same is true for the repartimiento or mita. Some areas suffered great population loss, while others did not; still others had little or no population to start with. Some estates arose

from holdings associated with *encomiendas*, others from lands accumulated by administrative and judicial officials, others from humble wheat farms. From region to region the hacienda veered toward pastoralism, cereal production, sugar growing, and other activities. But we can cope with all these variations if we understand them as retarding, hastening, or modifying an institution that was ultimately embedded in Spanish social practice and had its own coherence, its own dynamics of development.

One may conclude that the rise of the hacienda was essentially a development rather than a struggle. The evolution of the great estate responded to such realities as the size of cities and Spanish populations, the degree of acculturation among the Indians, and the nature of Spanish society in early modern times. The royal policy of discouraging an independent aristocracy and the humanitarian campaigns to protect the Indians deserve intensive study in themselves, but the struggles over these matters cannot be said to have greatly affected the evolution of the great estate. Wherever it might appear that the Crown or the Church became a prime mover in its development, one will find on close examination that deeper forces were at work. Crown policy has been credited with the destruction of the *encomienda*, but natural developments in the colonies had doomed the institution. On the one hand, the fortunes arising from commerce and mining were not directly dependent upon the *encomienda*; on the other hand, the sheer growth of Spanish society produced newly powerful families who began to carve out estates of their own, undermining the inflexible *encomienda* system.

Historians have commonly observed the general tendency of the Conquest period to set basic patterns for later times. The hacienda, taking shape in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has appeared to be a major exception. But the interpretation of the great estate set forth here reintegrates the hacienda into the general picture. From the broader perspective one may argue that the Conquest period created the function and the basic social and economic modes of organization, while following years brought mainly growth or shrinkage—in other words, quantitative change. Such a view implies that perhaps scholars investigating the history of the hacienda should begin at the beginning. One of the few complaints that one might bring against the magnificent work of Chevalier is that, faced with a vast body of material on the hacienda, he accepted a conventional view of the Conquest period and the *encomienda*, without submitting them

to the same kind of analysis which he applied to his more immediate subject.

In general, those who engage in future research on forms of the great estate should take into account the institution's multiple dimensions and not limit themselves to "hacienda studies," or to the study of "land and labor systems," or most especially to "rural history." In all known embodiments the Spanish American great estate was closely related to the city, indeed almost inseparable from it. Spanish American colonial history has three principal elements: the city, the great estate, and the Indian village. Of these only the village was truly and thoroughly rural. The function of the great estate was to mediate between city and country, to carry back and forth supplies, people, and ideas that were vital to the growth of Spanish American civilization.