

Encomienda, Hacienda and Corregimiento in Spanish America: A Structural Analysis

ROBERT G. KEITH*

ONE OF THE MORE puzzling problems in the history of Spanish America is that of the relationship between the encomienda and the hacienda. This question has recently been re-examined in a suggestive article by James Lockhart, who asserts the importance of a number of generally unemphasized continuities between the two institutions.¹ As he points out, historians usually assumed until about forty years ago that the connection between the two institutions was a simple and direct one—that the encomienda had essentially evolved into the hacienda. This early view of the matter subsequently yielded to the interpretation of Silvio Zavala and Lesley B. Simpson, who argued that since an encomienda grant in itself conferred no rights to land, there was no juridical connection between the two institutions.² Looking at individual encomiendas and haciendas, however, Lockhart points out that one can easily establish continuity of possession and location in specific cases. Statistically, these continuities may not be very significant, since the number of haciendas in most regions seems to have been considerably greater than the number of encomiendas. Nevertheless, the most typical situation in any area seems to have been one in which “the oldest, stablest, most prestigious, and best-located hacienda would have stemmed from the landholdings of the original encomendero and his family.”³ In any case, regardless of whether there is a direct line of descent, there is no question but that the same class of people controlled both institutions. This certainly suggests a relationship, but it does not take us far enough toward defining the connection precisely.

Lockhart's analysis of the similarities between the encomienda and the hacienda in actual practice—what might be called the functional continuities between the two institutions—takes us considerably fur-

* The author is Assistant Professor of History at Southeastern Massachusetts University.

1. “Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies,” *HAHR*, 49:3 (August 1969), 411-429.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 425-426.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

ther, suggesting that each served as the basis of a great estate.⁴ He shows that *encomiendas* and *haciendas* were both controlled by members of a Spanish aristocracy who normally preferred to live in towns rather than on their estates. Both the *encomenderos* and the *hacendados* employed Spanish or near-Spanish *mayordomos* and *estancieros* to supervise their Indian or near-Indian labor forces in agricultural and stock-raising enterprises. Although there was no legal sanction for it, both *encomenderos* and *hacendados* possessed in practice some jurisdiction over their Indians or peons, which they exercised in paternalistic fashion. It seems obvious, then, that the two institutions served the aristocracy in much the same way, providing it with the means of living in a proper style and perpetuating its control over the lower classes.

My purpose here is to clarify another aspect of the relationship between the *encomienda* and the *hacienda* by analyzing what might be called the structural continuities and discontinuities between the two institutions. The concept of the "structure" of an institution may need some definition. Rather than things which exist in the sense that they occupy space and can be touched or seen, institutions are concepts invented to describe the often complex associations of real people and things. Thus the institution of the *encomienda* is not just a group of Indians. It is also the *encomendero* himself with his dependents as well as property belonging to both Indians and Spaniards. More importantly, it is also the complex set of relationships which tie these people and things together and connect them to the larger society outside the *encomienda*. One can describe an *hacienda* in similar fashion. The structure of the institution may be defined as the pattern of these relationships.⁵ In determining this structure, I will be describing ideal types rather than typical institutions.⁶ This may seem illogical, since a typical institution would seem to be more closely tied to reality than an ideal type which does not actually exist. Nevertheless, analysis in terms of ideal types can make it possible to see patterns which are often obscured by the variety and complexity of real institutions.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 419-425; see also Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1968), pp. 22-33.

5. On the concept of social structure and its relation to function see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952), ch. X.

6. On Weber's use of ideal types, see H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), pp. 59-60. It may be useful to think of the ideal type as a kind of "limit," which may be approached but is never actually reached.

The following structural analysis will point out a number of important discontinuities between the encomienda and the hacienda, and at the same time it will suggest that there were some important continuities between the encomienda and the institution known as the *corregimiento de indios*.⁷ It will also suggest that one reason for the confused pattern of relationships between the encomienda and the hacienda is that the encomienda suffered from an internal conflict between Spanish and indigenous components. This conflict eventually led to what might be described as a split in the institution itself, a split which gave rise to two new institutions: the hacienda and the *corregimiento*.

First the encomienda. The term itself is somewhat ambiguous. As Lockhart has pointed out, there were two major tendencies within the institution, the "repartimiento" of local inspiration and the "encomienda," conceived by government officials. While modern historians have generally called this institution the encomienda, sixteenth-century Spaniards preferred to call it the repartimiento.⁸ The change in usage possibly stems from a belief that in the long run the encomienda traits were the more important. There are two reasons, however for disagreeing with any such assumption. First, although it is true that the encomienda tendency eventually predominated in the central areas of Spanish settlement, it often failed to do so on the periphery. Thus the repartimiento tendency was at one time dominant in all areas, while this was never true of the encomienda tendency. Secondly, since the encomienda traits represent changes imposed on the original institution from outside, it seems somewhat illogical to consider them more fundamental than the original repartimiento traits, even though the latter gradually became less important in most areas. It would thus be more consistent to call the institution the repartimiento, but since this would conflict with accepted usage, I will continue to use the term "encomienda."

As it developed in the New World, the encomienda had little if any specific connection with the institution which had been called the encomienda in Spain. Both in its original form established by Columbus in the Antilles (under the name of "repartimiento"), and after its subsequent modification and renaming by Ovando, it was a practical arrangement made by local authorities to meet problems quite dif-

7. The *corregimiento de indios* (hereafter referred to as the *corregimiento*) may be defined for our purposes as an institution for the administration of the traditional Indian population using individuals appointed by the crown or its viceroys for a limited term of office. In Peru, these officials were called *corregidores de indios*, but in New Spain many of them were known as *alcaldes mayores*.

8. Lockhart, "Encomienda and Hacienda," p. 415.

ferent from those which had given rise to the peninsular *encomienda*. The *reconquista*, after all, had established Castilian dominance over a more advanced society, in an economic and technological sense, while the reverse was true in the New World. In Spain, the *encomienda* was essentially a *seigneurie* whose main peculiarity was that it was held for a limited period of time (it may have been for this reason that the crown liked the name).⁹ The most important rights it conferred were rights to land, while the Antillean *encomienda* conferred direct rights over Indians who themselves had legal status as landowners.¹⁰

Some of the societies later conquered by the Spaniards were of course much more elaborately organized than that of the Antillean Arawaks, but there were other reasons for continuing to use the Columbus-Ovando model instead of shifting to a seigniorial system such as existed in Europe. At the beginning, rights to land were of little economic value anywhere in the New World. There were few local precedents for such rights, although a landed aristocracy was apparently beginning to appear in Mexico and Peru at the time of the Spanish conquest. Where Indian commoners owed tribute and labor, they paid it directly to their rulers with little or no reference to the land, which was "owned," for practical purposes, by local communities.¹¹ Finally, control of land did not necessarily confer control of the labor needed to exploit it; there was nothing to keep Indians from moving away, until a later time when Spaniards controlled most of the available arable land.¹² For all of these reasons, then, the Spaniards found it necessary to adopt everywhere the Antillean *encomienda* involving direct rights to the labor and tribute of Indians.

Such a system was not recognized as inevitable at first. Columbus seems originally to have believed it possible to support Spanish immigrants to Española as the Portuguese did in Africa, with salaries taken out of the expected profits of trade with the Indians.¹³

9. On the sixteenth-century usage of the terms "repartimiento" and "encomienda" see *ibid.*, p. 415, note.

10. The best analysis of this whole question may be found in Mario Góngora, *El estado en el derecho indiano: época de fundación (1492-1570)*, pp. 100-116.

11. Edward P. Lanning, *Peru before the Incas* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967), pp. 164-165; John V. Murra, "On Inca Political Structure," in *Comparative Political Systems: Studies in the Politics of Pre-Industrial Societies*, ed. by Ronald Cohen and John Middleton (Garden City, N. Y., 1967), p. 353; François Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda* (Berkeley, 1963), pp. 20-23.

12. See Eric R. Wolf and Sidney W. Mintz, "Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles," *Social and Economic Studies*, 6 (1957), 389-390.

13. Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, "Las Indias en el reino de los reyes católicos," in *Historia social y económica de España y América*, ed. by Jaime Vicens Vives (Barcelona, 1957-59), II, 530-534.

When this proved impracticable, he still thought the Spaniards could be paid out of Indian tributes collected by the government. The Spaniards thought otherwise, however, and Roldán's rebellion compelled Columbus to set up the system of encomiendas, by which specified groups of Indians were distributed among individual Spaniards to use in practice as they saw fit.¹⁴

This system of encomiendas, as modified by Ovando and exported to the mainland, gave individual Spaniards the right to demand labor and tribute from the Indians assigned to them (both rights being limited in theory, though not in practice until many years later) and also turned them into *de facto* administrators, responsible for the control and the welfare of these Indians. Both the administration and exploitation of the Indians were performed through the existing local political authorities, the *caciques*, whose name, along with the term "repartimiento," was carried by the Spaniards from the Caribbean to other parts of the New World. The encomienda system thus was based on the largely unconscious assumption that indigenous social, political, and economic organization would survive in more or less the same state in which the Spaniards found it, because there seemed to be no alternative to the control and exploitation of Indian populations through arrangements and patterns which already existed. In an anthropological sense, the institution's aims were fundamentally conservative.¹⁵

On the other hand, the Spaniards failed to realize that many of the seemingly limited changes which they introduced could seriously affect the ability of the Indian societies to survive. There was thus a serious conflict between the unconscious assumptions on which the encomienda system was based and the conscious ideological assumptions which led Spaniards to believe that Indians should be converted to Christianity and taught to live like Spaniards. There was an even

14. Carl O. Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley, 1966), pp. 93-95 and 100-103.

15. Its conservatism is analogous to that of the administrative system later used by the British and known as "indirect rule." When the British first began to set up local administrations in Africa, many of them preferred to make use of the existing political authorities as much as possible, justifying this in part on the grounds that traditional political systems were "natural growths" which should be encouraged rather than replaced with something more in line with European preferences. They later came to realize that this often had the effect of entrenching a conservative minority in power and making it more difficult to bring about the changes which were increasingly demanded by those elements in the population most affected by the process of economic development. See Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 254-256 and J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa* (4th ed., New York, 1969), pp. 182-186. A more detailed analysis may be found in David E. Apter, *Ghana in Transition* (rev. ed., Princeton, N. J., 1963), chs. 6 and 7.

more fundamental tension between these unconscious assumptions and the market-oriented economic ideology of the Spaniards, though the importance of this factor varied with the extent to which a market economy was locally viable. As one would expect, this latter conflict was most serious in regions where Indian labor could be used profitably for gold and silver mining; it seems to have been in the gold-mining areas, such as the Antilles and Panama, where its effects were most destructive.

This analysis of the *encomienda* system suggests that the ideal type of *encomienda* would have been one which was consistently conservative, not infiltrated by Spanish ideas and techniques. It would have given an individual Spaniard the right to exact labor and tribute from a specified group of Indians in amounts theoretically equivalent to what they had previously given their own rulers. It would have given him residual administrative responsibility for these Indians. But both the exploitation and the administration of the *encomienda* would have been performed through the existing indigenous social and political structure, which was to survive in all its essentials, except at the top level where the Spaniards inserted themselves. The *encomienda* would not have involved any obligation on the part of the *encomendero* to convert and teach his Indian charges, or any large-scale use of Indian labor in mining enterprises, since both tended to undermine the underlying indigenous society. Nor, for the same reason, could the institution have involved agricultural production for a Spanish market. An ideal type of *encomienda* would also have produced what its *encomendero* required without any need for the intervention of *mayordomos* and *estancieros*. The real *encomiendas* which most closely resembled this ideal type were therefore not found in developed regions like New Spain and Peru, or even in the first-settled regions of the Antilles and Panama, but rather in the most remote and undeveloped areas where the economic ties with Europe were most tenuous. In Paraguay, for instance, the economic demands created by a market system were practically non-existent, the *encomiendas* were very small, and the disruptive effects of social change seem to have been greatly limited by the fact that the *encomenderos* tended to become assimilated into the indigenous kinship systems. A similar, though somewhat less "ideal" situation seems to have existed in Venezuela.¹⁶

In most cases, the real *encomiendas* of Spanish America failed to

16. Elman R. Service, *Spanish-Guaraní Relations in Early Colonial Paraguay*. University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, Anthropological Papers, No. 9 (Ann Arbor, 1954), pp. 30-37, 58, and 61; Eduardo Arcila Farías, *El régimen de la encomienda en Venezuela* (Seville, 1957), chs. 8 and 9.

maintain Indian communities in the kind of isolation that would have been necessary for them to survive relatively unchanged. Instead, encomiendas tended to divide into two distinct parts: one associated with the traditional indigenous economy of subsistence and local markets, and another associated with the new and expanding economy of the Spanish mines and cities. Thus while the ideal type of encomienda would have been a stable institution, the real encomienda was generally unstable. It could achieve stability only if one of its parts could attain a clear dominance over the other.

The attempt to define an ideal type of hacienda presents the same kind of problem. There are, and always have been, important regional variations in the Spanish American hacienda. Most students of the subject have chosen as typical a kind of hacienda which might be called manorial, and which has existed mainly in central Mexico, the Andean highlands, and Chile. The distinctive characteristics of this type of hacienda are two. First, it lacks both capital and advanced technology, due mainly to its dependence on regional markets incapable of generating sufficient demand to justify large investments. Secondly, it maintains control over its labor force of serf-like peons by using a variety of indirect social and economic mechanisms, including the monopolization of land.¹⁷ There have always been other types of haciendas, however, such as those which produced tropical crops like sugar or cacao with a labor force primarily composed of Negro slaves, or those which were devoted mainly to stock raising and which used relatively little labor of any kind.

This diversity of hacienda types seems less confusing when we look at the hacienda in comparison with the encomienda. Both institutions gave members of an upper class (usually but not always made up of Spaniards) control over a supply of labor. In the case of the encomienda, however, this control was achieved directly, through grants which assigned specific groups of Indians to individual Spaniards, while in the case of the hacienda the control was indirect.

As we have seen, the encomienda was dependent on the traditional indigenous economy of each region where it was established, and therefore required the survival of traditional indigenous society without radical change. The hacienda, on the other hand, possessed a labor force which had been largely removed from its traditional social environment and permanently settled on land belonging to the estate. To the extent that this development was complete and transitional practices such as the labor repartimiento or *mita* had disappeared, the

17. See Wolf and Mintz, "Haciendas and Plantations," pp. 386-395.

hacienda was completely independent of the traditional indigenous economy of its region.¹⁸ In fact, the collapse of the indigenous economies seems to have been one of the main stimuli to the development of haciendas. Thus while the encomienda system required the survival of the indigenous society without radical change, the development of the hacienda system required that this society be largely destroyed and its members transformed into an agricultural proletariat.

It was suggested earlier that the establishment of ties with the European economy led to conflicts within the encomienda system which were among the main reasons for its widespread failure, so that the ideal type of encomienda would have been one whose ties to the European economy were non-existent. Such was clearly not the case with the hacienda, which was always dependent on a fairly large market for its products, and which therefore developed most rapidly in those areas whose ties with the European economy were strongest. Thus one might argue that while the encomienda was essentially a pre-capitalistic institution which was corrupted in varying degrees by capitalistic features, the hacienda was basically a capitalistic institution which was corrupted in varying degrees by anti-capitalistic or "feudal" features.¹⁹ The ideal type of the hacienda, then, would be one which was completely capitalistic. The main differences between the hacienda and the plantation can be explained in terms of the latter's greater access to large markets and capital. Thus haciendas can be seen as plantations which are "underdeveloped" due to the absence of sufficiently large markets and to the scarcity of capital in the regions where they exist. This conclusion gains support from the fact that where economic conditions have become more favorable, as they have for example on the Peruvian coast, haciendas have evolved into plantations.

The essential characteristics of the ideal type of hacienda, therefore, are its basis in rights to land, its independence of traditional indigenous social and economic organization, and its ties to the expanding European economy. It is thus quite different from the ideal type of en-

18. "Transitional" is meant here in a logical rather than a strictly temporal sense, since in some areas the practices referred to survived into the nineteenth century.

19. Marxist scholars have for a number of years strongly emphasized the capitalistic nature of the hacienda and demoted its "feudal" elements to a position of relative unimportance. Andre Gunder Frank, for instance, in his recent *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, 1967), pp. 33-37 and 124-133, describes the hacienda as essentially capitalistic and points out the importance of its ties with the European economy, although he also considers the encomienda a basically capitalistic institution.

comienda. This does not mean, of course, that there was no connection between real encomiendas and haciendas, but it does suggest that the connection was a fairly complicated one.

I would argue that in a structural sense the closest ties of the encomienda were with the corregimiento, in which the tribute system and the tradition of maintaining a separate *república de los indios* were continued with some changes from the 1550s through the end of the colonial period.²⁰ True, it was no longer assumed that traditional Indian society could be preserved without major changes. Pressures from the Spanish part of society had clearly made that impossible. But within the new corregimientos, Indians could be "reduced" from their depleted and isolated settlements to larger towns where conditions favored the combination of Indian and Spanish patterns of behavior and belief, thus making possible the development of a new "Indian" society, which was not traditional but was still essentially indigenous.²¹ This new "Indian" society was considerably more resistant to Spanish pressures than the traditional Indian society had been, as may be seen from the increasing number of cases in which Indian communities were able to resist Spanish attempts to deprive them of land. The corregimientos, of course, had their own evils—paid officials were, if anything, less likely to protect the Indians than the encomenderos had been—but it was nevertheless the establishment of the system of corregimientos which created the main indigenous nuclei of resistance to the expansion of haciendas, nuclei which in some areas have survived to reverse the process in recent years.

In summary, then, we can say that soon after the conquest in many areas encomiendas began to divide into two distinct parts, one of which was still tied to the weakening indigenous economy while the other was connected with the developing Spanish economy in each region. After about 1550, these two parts gradually separated, the indigenous part being turned over to officials appointed by the crown or its representatives, while the Spanish part often but not always became the nucleus of an hacienda owned by the encomendero or his descendants.

This split in the encomienda was a logical consequence of the divided character of the institution, but that does not absolve us from the task of further analysis of the process. To simplify, local changes of a social and economic nature made it possible for the crown to act on its persistent dislike for the encomienda of the conquistadores, depriving the encomenderos of effective control over the traditional Indian

20. See John L. Phelan, *The Kingdom of Quito in the Seventeenth Century* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1967), p. 58.

21. See Eric Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago, 1959), pp. 214 ff.

population. As a result, the encomenderos were compelled to change their encomienda "estates" into estates based on the control of land.

There were a number of reasons why the crown disliked the encomienda. It considered that *servicio personal* infringed the liberty which Indians should have as free subjects, not so much because it forced them to work against their will, as because it forced them to work for particular Spaniards, turning them into perpetual bond-servants.²² The crown believed, on the basis of what had happened in the Antilles, that the encomienda led to the mistreatment of the Indians and was therefore the major cause of depopulation, although this was probably unfair, since the main cause of the disaster was almost certainly the conflict resulting from the development of an extreme form of a gold-induced market economy. Indeed, later in the sixteenth century a number of highly reputable missionaries and officials came to the conclusion that the encomienda was the best guarantee of the welfare of the Indian population, and argued in favor of making encomiendas perpetual.²³

Perhaps more important than the crown's humanitarian opposition to the encomienda was its justified fear that the purpose of the encomenderos was to turn themselves into uncontrollable feudal lords. Having recently dealt with a powerful and independent nobility in Spain, it could not view with equanimity the prospect that an even more powerful and independent nobility might appear in the New World.

The crown had no intention of abolishing the encomienda completely, however.²⁴ It merely wanted to eliminate objectionable features of the institution. To begin with, *servicio personal* had to be ended and replaced with a system in which Indians had somewhat more choice as to whom they were forced to work for. Secondly, the right to Indian tribute had to be separated from most of the administrative functions performed by the encomenderos, because it was this conjunction which most seriously threatened the crown's control. Then the administrative functions had to be reassigned to officials whose dependence on the crown was guaranteed in other ways. The responsiveness of these officials, the *corregidores de indios*, was insured by the fact

22. J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* (New York, 1966), pp. 176-177.

23. See, for instance, Juan de Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú* (Paris and Lima, 1967), p. 99 and also Hernando de Santillán, "Relación del origen, descendencia, política, y gobierno de los Incas," in *Crónicas peruanas de interés indígena*, ed. by Francisco Esteve Barba (Madrid, 1968), p. 118.

24. The New Laws of 1542, rather than abolishing encomiendas, would simply have provided for them to be taken over by the crown. One group of Spaniards would thus have replaced another, without changing the essential structure of the institution.

that they were appointed for relatively short terms of office. Once the encomenderos had been deprived of effective jurisdiction over their Indians, they could retain the right to receive tribute at levels assessed by officials of the crown. As far as they were concerned, the encomienda had at that point become little more than a prestigious pension.

The corregimiento was essentially a new type of encomienda, one which was controlled by appointed officials rather than settlers. Corregimientos tended to cover a somewhat larger area than the original encomiendas, mainly because of the depopulation which had taken place since the conquest. The corregimiento had two outside obligations lacking in the encomienda: the encomenderos' pensions as a fixed charge on its revenues, and the labor repartimiento or *mita* as a theoretically proportional charge on the total labor time of its Indians. In other respects, however, there was little change. Corregidores demanded what they could get from their Indians in tribute and compelled them to supply labor for their agricultural enterprises, thus developing ties to the Spanish economy just as the encomenderos had done before them.²⁵

This transformation naturally took a number of years to complete. The encomenderos had well-established relationships with Indian leaders, and their help could be of considerable value to a new corregidor, while their opposition could constitute a serious hindrance. Thus in practice, an agreement was often reached under which the encomenderos were unofficially permitted to make some illegal use of Indian labor, much as the *caciques* had earlier done with the tacit approval of the encomenderos.

The crown would probably not have been able to bring about these reforms in the system had it not been that new forces of a social and economic nature had already greatly weakened the position of the encomenderos. The encomienda system had originally conferred on those Spaniards who received Indians an almost complete monopoly over the exploitation of the indigenous economy, and it had thus effectively deprived most non-encomenderos of means to support themselves independently in a style they would have considered acceptable. It should not be assumed, however, that the system was an unreasonable one. Certainly there were not and could not have been enough encomiendas to make it possible for every Spaniard to have one, but if the demographic situation had remained fairly stable, encomenderos could

25. A 1580 *visita* of the corregimiento of Cañete (Peru), for instance, reveals that the corregidor was using unpaid labor from the Indian town of Carabayllo to plant wheat fields. This could occur within a few miles of Lima itself, during the later years of the administration of the reforming Viceroy Toledo. Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, A537.

probably have supported enough other Spaniards as dependents to neutralize rivals and opponents.²⁶

The situation did not remain stable, however. The tales of the fabulous wealth of the Indian empires acted as a magnet which drew Spaniards to Mexico and Peru from all over the Indies and from Spain. At the same time, the indigenous economies grew seriously weaker, primarily due to the effects of epidemic disease, but also as a result of the wars of conquest and the conflicts within the *encomienda* system which were mentioned earlier. These changes made it considerably more difficult for the *encomenderos* to support large numbers of dependents and led to the rise of a class of discontented non-*encomenderos* who represented a serious threat to political stability. The process can be most clearly observed in Peru, where these *soldados*, as they were popularly known, were most numerous. Their presence there seems to have been the main reason for the fifteen years of civil war which followed the conquest. Governors and viceroys clearly recognized the threat posed by the *soldados*, and until the 1570s spent much of their time and energy trying to rid the land (“descargar la tierra,” in the picturesque Castilian of the sixteenth century) of these men whose presence served only to encourage rebellion and civil strife.²⁷

Nevertheless, in spite of the *soldados*’ apparent threat to crown authority, their existence proved in the long run to be in the crown’s interest. Their main goal was to obtain *encomiendas* for themselves, and they were thus less of a menace to the crown than to the *encomenderos*. For the same reason, the crown’s attempts to reform the *encomienda* system were usually a less immediate danger to the *encomenderos* than was the existence of the *soldados*.²⁸ Thus, for the *encomenderos*, alliance with the crown was the best guarantee of retaining privileges threatened by the *soldados*, and it is noteworthy that in the Peruvian civil wars, the bulk of the *encomenderos* were always found on the royal side, except in 1544, when the intemperate enforcement of

26. This type of arrangement is similar to the “prebendary” type of vassalage described by Marc Bloch in *Feudal Society* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 68-69.

27. See Lockhart, *Spanish Peru*, ch. 8. As Lockhart points out, the size of this group of *soldados* has often been exaggerated, but even without such exaggeration, it was certainly large enough to upset the political balance in Peru. It is also true that opposition to the economic monopoly of the *encomenderos* did not come entirely from the *soldados*, but it was the *soldados* who were most militant and most effective.

28. Marcel Bataillon (“Les colons du Perou contre Charles Quint: Analyse du mouvement pizarriste [1544-1548],” *Annales: économies-sociétés-civilisations*, 12 [1967], 486-487) sees this antagonism between *encomenderos* and non-*encomenderos* as the explanation of the particularly barbarous nature of the Peruvian civil wars and of the rise of such “specialists in terror” as Hernando Bachicao and Francisco de Carvajal.

the New Laws by Viceroy Blasco Núñez Vela seemed to threaten the whole class with immediate loss of all its privileges. Even then, most encomenderos switched sides as soon as Blasco Núñez' successor, Pedro de la Gasca, assured them that their encomiendas would not be taken.²⁹

It was largely the conflict between the encomenderos and the *soldados*, then, which made it possible for Gasca to reassert the authority of the crown in Peru with so little difficulty. This clash of interests, however, could also be used by the crown to bring about reforms of the encomienda system which the encomenderos would not otherwise have accepted without a serious, perhaps victorious struggle. At first cautiously and then with greater confidence, Mexican and Peruvian viceroys took advantage of this fact to limit the encomenderos' economic and political monopoly, and to encourage the growth of a new and enlarged aristocracy whose wealth was based primarily on the control of land rather than on the direct control of Indians.

Well before the end of the sixteenth century, then, the men who held encomiendas in New Spain and Peru had ceased to be encomenderos in the full original sense of the word. They had lost most of their ancillary privileges, while their tributes, the one major source of profit still left, were diminishing rapidly due to the impact of European diseases on the Indian population. Thus they were compelled to find other ways of maintaining their wealth and position in colonial society. The majority responded by building up large landholdings, even though this encouraged their rivals to do the same; the impossibility of continuing to base their "estates" on direct administrative control of Indians left the control of land as the only feasible alternative.

This development was related to the political situation in the viceroyalties. Once they had established their authority in a limited way by bringing the encomenderos under control, the crown and its local representatives could maintain their position only by the careful use of patronage, the granting of the *mercedes* or rewards expected by all those who had served the crown in the conquest and settlement of the new lands. Yet there remained few encomiendas (pensions) to be given away, and dividing existing encomiendas was not a very practical solution, although it was tried. Administrative offices, and especially the office of *corregidor de indios*, also could be used as rewards, but there were not enough of these to go around either, and many such offices were short term or of little value. Furthermore, the crown's desire to increase the patronage it could exercise directly from Spain,

29. Gonzalo Pizarro and his advisors seem to have understood this fact, since they tried to prevent any communications from Gasca from entering Peru. The Henry E. Huntington Library, *From Panama to Peru* (London, 1925), p. 150.

as well as its fear of overly independent viceroys, led it increasingly to restrict viceregal patronage. The main reward the viceroys could offer to people who were already in the New World, then, was land.

Land had not previously been given away in large quantities, because it had little real value except for those who had access to the labor necessary to work it, and the demand for it was therefore small outside the immediate vicinity of the Spanish towns. It was only in the 1550s, with the abolition of the *encomenderos*' labor monopoly and the increased availability of Indian labor through the labor repartimiento, that there grew up a significant demand for land.³⁰

Both in Mexico and Peru, the viceroys took advantage of this increased demand and used land grants as a means of satisfying and settling those whose participation in the conquest and colonization of the country gave them a claim on the government, but who had come too late or were too unimportant to be rewarded with an *encomienda*.³¹ The 1550s and 1560s saw the establishment of the first towns whose founders received no *encomiendas*: places like Cañete and Chancay on the Peruvian coast, and San Miguel, Lagos, and Nombre de Dios in Mexico. The one precedent had been the town of Puebla, founded in 1531. The founders of Puebla, however, had to be granted the right to use Indian labor taken from royal *encomiendas*, and the main lesson to be drawn from Puebla's success was that similar towns could not be founded until Spaniards without *encomiendas* could be provided easier access to labor.³²

30. On the central Peruvian coast, a region which developed more rapidly than most parts of Spanish America, I was able to find no evidence in a year of archival research that any individual Spaniards obtained legal title to any land outside of a relatively small area around the city of Lima until 1549, when land grants were made to several *encomenderos*. Before that time, only the Church seems to have owned land away from the city. In New Spain, there is some evidence of land grants made at a distance from the Spanish towns in the 1530s (see Chevalier, *Land and Society*, pp. 52-58) but Enrique Florescano ("El abasto y la legislación de granos en el siglo XVI," *Historia Mexicana*, 14 [1964-65], 570-71) argues on the basis of evidence concerning the consumption of wheat in the city of Mexico that it was only after 1550 that a significant number of Spaniards developed a serious interest in commercial agriculture. I would suspect that in both New Spain and Peru, the discovery of large silver mines during the 1540s created the preconditions for an agricultural "take-off" which occurred in the 1550s, and that it was only after this that the Spaniards, beginning with the *encomenderos*, began to take legal possession of large amounts of land.

31. See Lockhart's excellent analysis of the qualifications necessary for receiving an *encomienda* in *Spanish Peru*, pp. 13-21.

32. The Indians assigned to work in Puebla were from Tlaxcala and Cholula, and to compensate them for their additional labor, the tribute they owed the crown was decreased. In 1539, however, the Tlaxcalans succeeded in obtaining a *cédula* which freed them from this service. Mariano Fernández Echeverría y Veytía, *Historia de la fundación de la ciudad de la Puebla de los Angeles* (2 vols.,

For the encomenderos, the founding of these new towns represented an additional threat, and there were some encomenderos who made an effort to stop the process.³³ But their weak political position made their attitude somewhat ambivalent. If they applied for land for themselves, they admitted the right of the viceroys to make land-grants within the area of their encomiendas. If they failed to apply for grants, they risked loss of land they were already using without legal title. Many encomenderos understood the situation and through acquisition of land grants, made a successful changeover from the role of encomendero to that of hacendado. Some were not so perceptive. Antonio Navarro, for instance, an encomendero whose Indians lived in and to the north of the Cañete valley on the Peruvian coast, failed to obtain title to any land in that valley, although he and his father had earlier established agricultural and cattle-raising enterprises there. As a result, he was forced completely out of the valley when the town of Cañete was founded in 1556.³⁴

In our analysis of the structure of the encomienda, we have seen that it was essentially a pre-capitalistic institution. The pattern of its evolution in Mexico and Peru, however, suggested that in the main areas of Spanish settlement, where ties with the European economy were closer, it tended to take on some of the capitalistic attributes later possessed by the hacienda, even though these attributes conflicted with the conservative assumptions on which the encomienda system was based and thus increased the speed of its collapse. In more remote areas the situation was different. The relative absence of incentives to emigrate to such areas meant that there was no significant class of poor Spaniards which the crown could play off against the encomenderos, and the encomienda system thus survived in its original form much longer. In Venezuela, for example, *servicio personal* continued to exist legally until the late seventeenth century, when the expansion of cacao production on haciendas using Negro

Puebla, 1931), I, 141; Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, 1952), p. 165.

33. In 1562, for instance, the Conde de Nieva, then viceroy of Peru, wrote the king that the foundation of the town of Chancay had been opposed by the members of the Lima cabildo, who feared its effect on wheat prices, and particularly by one Ruy Barba Cabeza de Vaca, an encomendero in the valley where the town was to be established. Barba, according to the Viceroy, had "occupied and usurped most of the best land in the valley" in addition to the relatively small amount he actually owned. Roberto Levillier (ed.), *Gobernantes del Perú. Cartas y papeles, siglo XVI: Documentos del Archivo de Indias* (14 vols., Madrid, 1921-26), I, 503.

34. Archivo Histórico del Cuzco, Sociedad de Beneficencia, sala I, est. 5, ana. 7-18, fol. 748 ff.

slave labor presumably made its abolition politically possible, and in Paraguay it seems to have lasted even longer.³⁵ The territory of New Granada, where *encomiendas* began to give way to *haciendas* about the beginning of the seventeenth century, seems to represent an intermediate case.³⁶

In conclusion, then, one can say that both the *hacienda* and the *corregimiento* developed out of the Spanish effort to reconcile the contradictions which were built into the *encomienda* system. From the beginning, this system presupposed the survival of the indigenous societies on which it was dependent. But the indigenous societies could survive only if they were not forced to change too radically, and this turned out to be an impossible condition, partly because of the incidence of epidemic disease which decimated the Indian population, but also because the Spaniards could not refrain from tampering with them. The conquistadores had come to the New World with the intention of getting rich, and they were thus unable to resist the temptation of using their *encomiendas* to impose enterprises of a capitalistic type on pre-capitalistic societies which were totally unfamiliar with them. As a result, the *encomiendas* came to be divided into two conflicting parts, one traditional and the other capitalistic.

Had there been no outside intervention, the logical outcome of this situation would have been the gradual disappearance of the traditional part of the institution and also of the distinct Indian society which was associated with it. The avoidance of such an outcome was due mainly to the crown, which intervened against the *encomenderos* and in favor of the indigenous societies, partly because of its financial interest in Indian tributes and partly because of its traditional concern for the preservation of Indian corporate life. Taking advantage of the weakness of the *encomendero* class, the crown was able to reform the institution of the *encomienda*, separating the traditional from the capitalistic elements, and insuring the dominance of the former in the remodeled institution, the *corregimiento*. As a result, the Indian communities were able to reorganize themselves and survive, though in a greatly diminished condition, while the Spaniards were free to organize their estates, the *haciendas*, as capitalistic institutions largely independent of Indian society.

35. Arcila Fariás, *El régimen de la encomienda*, p. 236; see also Service, *Spanish-Guaraní Relations*, p. 75.

36. Juan Friede, "Proceso de formación de la propiedad territorial en la América intertropical," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, II (1965), 75-87.