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Rural Work in Nueva Vizcaya: Forms of Labor Coercion on the Periphery

SUSAN M. DEEDS*

AT noon on a sweltering day in June 1674, a small group of Concho Indians, six men and five women, watched from the shade of a great alamo tree as riders approached. They could see that Captain Pedro de Zubia Pacheco, accompanied by two servants, was clearly agitated as he rode up. Waving his sword, he ordered the Indians to accompany him. At this juncture, Nicolás de Bejarano, the tenant of the wheat farm in the Valle de San Bartolomé where these events took place,¹ emerged from his house and, enraged at his loss of workers, called for his sword. Several neighbors who had hastened to the scene restrained him from attacking the older Zubia. In reply to Bejarano's angry charges that Zubia was stealing his repartimiento gang, the captain insisted that these were his encomienda Indians, and that the wheat harvest and corn plantings on his Hacienda de Cieneguilla were in danger of being lost for lack of a labor force. He then marched the startled, but compliant, Conchos out of there. Bejarano soon rallied, and lost little time in carrying a complaint to the local *alcalde mayor*, who ordered Captain Zubia's arrest.²

The subsequent criminal proceedings highlight many of the tensions inherent in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century evolution of labor systems in Nueva Vizcaya. The case, which was ultimately decided in favor of the repartimiento user, demonstrates that some encomienda grants survived until the end of the seventeenth century, and offers a clue to the severe shortage of agricultural laborers at harvest time, the use of Indian intermediaries in labor recruitment, the physical and psychological coer-

*The author would like to thank José Cuello, Donna J. Guy, Curtis Hinsley, Jr., Thomas H. Naylor, James D. Riley, and James S. Saeger for commenting on earlier drafts of this article.

1. Today, Valle de Allende in southeastern Chihuahua.

2. Causa criminal contra Capitán Pedro de Subia Pacheco, Parral, June 1674, Archivo de Hidalgo de Parral (microfilm copy in the University of Arizona Library, cited hereafter as AHP with reel and frame numbers), r. 1674d, fr. 1970-1999.

cion involved, and the shifting adaptive strategies of economic elites in a peripheral area.

The purpose of this article is to examine how these diverse patterns fit into an integrated picture of labor relations in agriculturally productive areas of Nueva Vizcaya. The Nueva Vizcayan heartland examined here encompasses the hill and valley region of the Sierra Madre's central plateau, running between Durango and Chihuahua. This study will illustrate that, for agricultural purposes, slavery and *encomienda* flourished in the seventeenth century, and *repartimiento* survived until late in the eighteenth century, long after "free" wage labor was employed in mining and after a small permanent class of resident hacienda workers had begun to evolve. In particular, forced draft labor performed by local indigenous peoples proved to be crucial in meeting the seasonal needs of agricultural production.

Two features of Nueva Vizcaya's labor history stand out. One is the overlapping and simultaneous implementation of a variety of methods for recruiting labor. The other is the predominant exercise of coercion throughout the entire spectrum of labor systems employed to extract mineral and agricultural surpluses from the region's population. The latter pattern will not surprise those scholars of colonial Latin America who have gained insight from core-periphery models which ascribe distinctively coercive characteristics to labor relations in peripheral areas of the world.³

Nonetheless, as Steve Stern has recently pointed out,⁴ during the past ten years a plethora of carefully researched studies of mining, agricultural, and *obraje* labor has painted a much more diverse picture of the coexistence of a variety of labor arrangements in discrete economic enterprises.⁵ These studies have generated significant skepticism about the validity of a core-periphery model which rests on clear-cut distinctions between labor systems in the core (free labor), the semiperiphery (share relations), and

3. For example: André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York, 1967) and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974).

4. Steve J. Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," *American Historical Review*, 93:4 (Oct. 1988), 829-872.

5. *Ibid.*, 849-858, 870-871. Individual works are too numerous to mention; for summaries, see Enrique Florescano, "The Formation and Economic Structure of the Hacienda in New Spain," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Leslie Bethell, ed. (Cambridge, 1984-), II, 164-171; Eric Van Young, "Mexican Rural History since Chevalier: The Historiography of the Colonial Mexican Hacienda," *Latin American Research Review*, 18:3 (1983); and Arnold J. Bauer, "Rural Workers in Spanish America: Problems of Peonage and Oppression," *HAHR*, 59:1 (Feb. 1979), 34-63. See also Richard J. Salvucci, *Textiles and Capitalism in Mexico: An Economic History of the Obrajes, 1539-1840* (Princeton, 1987), 40, 97-134.

the periphery (forced labor) of a world economic system. According to Wallerstein's world-systems theory, these forms of labor relations, in combination, benefit the development of the capitalistic system as a whole.⁶ Yet if the periphery itself, in this case colonial Latin America, is characterized by varying combinations of free and coerced labor, then the world system is not the only decisive causal force in determining economic and labor patterns. Stern proposes two other "motors" of the colonial economy: "popular strategies of resistance and survival in the periphery" and "mercantile and elite interests joined to an American 'center of gravity'."⁷ The first suggestion derives considerable support from the relatively recent work of Stern himself and others like Nancy Farriss who have emphasized the ability of lower socioeconomic status groups to fashion strategies of resistance which allowed them more autonomy (including some choice in labor arrangements).⁸ The second rests on a longer historiography which has subdivided Latin American colonial economies into dynamic core and marginal peripheral areas and assigned them distinctive labor characteristics.⁹

In the case of New Spain, labor systems were seen as having evolved in a sequential and overlapping progression from slavery to *encomienda*, to *repartimiento*, to free labor.¹⁰ The motors of these shifts were twofold: declining labor pools caused by Indian population loss and the transition from premodern to capitalistic economies producing for the market. The demographic factor declined in importance as indigenous populations recovered by the eighteenth century, but the links to interregional and world markets tended to grow in importance as commercial agriculture and mining expanded at the end of the colonial period. Therefore, in core regions of New Spain, or those with dynamic, productive enterprises linked to markets, free wage labor came to predominate. This was the case in the agricultural enterprises of the Valley of Mexico and eventually Guadalajara, as well as in the mines of Zacatecas and Guanajuato. In

6. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, 126–127.

7. Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System," 857–858.

8. "New Approaches to the Study of Peasant Rebellion and Consciousness: Implications of the Andean Experience," in *Resistance, Rebellion and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries*, Stern, ed. (Madison, 1987); Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, 1984). See also James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

9. Pioneering in this respect was Juan A. and Judith E. Villamarín, *Indian Labor in Mainland Colonial Spanish America* (Newark, DE, 1975). James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, in *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (New York, 1983), provide a synthesis based on this historiography.

10. Silvio Zavala and María Castelo, *Fuentes para la historia del trabajo en Nueva España*, 8 vols. (Mexico City, 1939–46); Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford, 1964), 220–256.

the commercially expanding agricultural areas of the Bajío, share relations were common.¹¹

In marginal economic areas, the evolutionary progress toward wage labor was arrested in the early stages. Thus, areas like Yucatán and northern New Spain retained more coercive, servile labor systems, including modified *encomienda* and *corvée* forms.¹² For François Chevalier, these coercive relations of production found their expression typically in debt peonage, but recent studies have emphasized the persistence of slavery, *encomienda*, and *repartimiento*.¹³ Paradoxically, then, these coercive institutions took root and endured in regions which had no preconquest mechanisms for the allocation and distribution of goods and services on a suprapkinship basis. Coercion provided what precedent could not, and served as a fairly rational, though inefficient, way to obtain labor from indigenous groups who did not demand monetary income and could not be induced readily to work for it.

At first glance, the variation in Mexican labor systems could be seen to be linked to the distinction between New Spain's core and marginal areas. On closer examination, however, one finds that each core area exhibits unique configurations of labor patterns, that the path to wage labor or indebtedness may have deviated from the classic sequence described by Gibson, and that coercion in some form is almost never completely absent.¹⁴ The same can be said of comparison among peripheral areas whose labor patterns perhaps demonstrate even less homogeneity. One reason for this is that the inherent political and structural instability of frontier regions engenders more idiosyncratic patterns of local factors which influence the use of labor. And in peripheral regions, the short supply of labor has not served the same catalytic function that it did in the Valley of Mexico in the transition to wage labor, at least for agricultural work.

In general, regional differences in labor patterns indicate that responses to labor needs were conditioned by peculiar configurations of

11. Gibson, *Aztecs under Spanish Rule*; Van Young, *Hacienda and Market in Eighteenth-Century Mexico: The Rural Economy of the Guadalajara Region, 1675-1820* (Berkeley, 1981); Peter J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge, 1971); David A. Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío: León, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 1978).

12. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule*, 47-48; Peter Gerhard, *The North Frontier of New Spain* (Princeton, 1982), 164-165; José Cuello, "The Persistence of Indian Slavery and *Encomienda* in the Northeast of Colonial Mexico, 1577-1723," *Journal of Social History*, 21 (Summer 1988), 683-700. This phenomenon had also been noted for other peripheral areas of the Spanish empire; see, for example, James S. Saeger, "Survival and Abolition: The Eighteenth-Century Paraguayan *Encomienda*," *The Americas*, 38:1 (July 1981), 59-85.

13. *La formation des grands domaines au Mexique: Terre et société aux XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris, 1952). On the question of whether peonage was synonymous with either debt or forced servitude, see Bauer, "Rural Workers" and Alan Knight, "Mexican Peonage: What Was It and Why Was It?," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 18:1 (May 1986), 41-74.

such local variables as population trends, the relative value of the natural resources being exploited, the degree of elite solidarity, regional and inter-regional market considerations, and indigenous sociocultural patterns. What were the local factors that sustained systems of forced labor in the Nueva Vizcayan heartland despite a shrinking Indian labor force from the early seventeenth century through much of the eighteenth? What were the roles of government officials, the agricultural elites, and the indigenous population in determining their endurance? Although the primary focus of this article is on agricultural, especially seasonal, work, other regional labor needs will be considered to provide an integrated picture of labor strategies.

In the late sixteenth century, silver first attracted settlers to the area north of Durango (see Map 1). The frontier moved northward to Chihuahua and beyond with successive silver strikes and boom-and-bust cycles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The well-watered valleys and rolling hills of the Sierra Madre's central plateau between Durango and Chihuahua became the source of foodstuffs for the mining economy. Despite the general aridity of the region, the alluvial flood plains and basin floors were suitable for wheat and maize cultivation with irrigation. The semiarid grasslands, dotted with springs, proved favorable for cattle ranching. The most prosperous area was the Valle de San Bartolomé, where cereal and livestock production coexisted.¹⁵ At the turn of the seventeenth century, the Nueva Galician bishop, Alonso de la Mota y Escobar, noted the cultivation of wheat, maize, many varieties of fruits and vegetables, and growing herds of cattle along the Río Florido.¹⁶ Livestock ranches were also found along the Conchos, San Pedro, and Nazas rivers. To the east of the rolling upland areas was the Bolsón de Mapiquí, where the hot desert climate limited land use to ranching. To the west rose the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Madre Occidental with its thousand-meter canyons. The productive land in that early mining region of Topia was confined to a few river valleys and isolated canyon bottoms where corn, sugarcane, and fruits were cultivated.¹⁷

The Spaniards who came to this area did not find it uninhabited. Over 300,000 ranchería Indians, semisedentary agriculturalists with no tradi-

14. For examples, see Cheryl E. Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos* (Albuquerque, 1985), 140–149 and Van Young, *Hacienda and Market*, 238–245. The author would like to thank José Cuello for contributing to the development of this insight.

15. For more extensive descriptions of the region, see Robert C. West, *The Mining Community in New Spain: The Parral Mining District* (Berkeley, 1949) and Gerhard, *The North Frontier of New Spain*, 161–243.

16. *Descripción geográfica de los reinos de Nueva Galicia, Nueva Vizcaya y Nuevo León* (Mexico City, 1940), 186–200.

17. West and J. J. Parsons, "The Topia Road: A Trans-Sierran Trail of Colonial Mexico," *Geographical Review*, 31 (1941), 406–413.



MAP I: Sixteenth-century Nueva Vizcaya

tion of town life, posed a potential obstacle to Spanish domination.¹⁸ The task of congregating the Concho, Acaxee, Xixime, Tepehuan, and lower

18. See Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson, 1962), 8-14, for a description of the dispersed settlement patterns of these groups who tilled maize, beans, chile, and squash in irrigable locations and hunted, changing rancheria locations from valley to mountain in a form of transhumance during the year. A dissenting view which hypothesizes a more urban type of settlement for some northwestern Indians is Daniel T. Reff, "Old World Diseases and the Dynamics of Indian and Jesuit Relations in Northwestern New Spain, 1520-1660," in *Ejidos and Regions of Refuge in Northwestern Mexico*, N. Ross Crumrine and Phil C. Weigand, eds. (Tucson, 1987), 85-94. For population estimates, see Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 169-170.

Tarahumara Indians fell to the Franciscan and Jesuit orders. It was a formidable task, but one that proved crucial to the development of the Nueva Vizcayan heartland because the mission enterprise facilitated the most efficient organization of agricultural manpower in a labor-scarce region. Although the labor shortage eventually led to the creation of a predominantly "free" work force in the northern mines, mission pueblos became the main source of seasonal agricultural labor.

Both mining and agriculture used a variety of labor systems, often overlapping, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the earliest workers used by Spaniards in Nueva Vizcaya were Indian and black slaves. Indian captives from the newly conquered areas as well as from Zacatecas and black slaves and Nahuatl-speaking Indians brought from central Mexico performed mining, agricultural, and domestic tasks.¹⁹ Many of the Indians resident on haciendas in the Parral area were classified as *naborios* and tied to the land in serflike status.²⁰ The less socially complex indigenous organization, coupled with native hostility to the invaders, worked against ready exploitation of local Indian labor. This posed a serious problem for silver mining until a steady extraregional supply of labor could be appropriated, but Spain's dependence on silver bullion meant that inducements to laborers would favor mining, especially for those tasks requiring technical skills. A voluntary, paid labor system did develop in the far northern mines from the midseventeenth century, replicating patterns found in Zacatecas and other areas of the near north.²¹ Ethnically, the mining labor force encompassed Indians, mestizos, mulattos, and blacks.²² Still, forced labor, particularly for less skilled jobs, and

19. On Indian slavery, see Charles W. Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, 3 vols. (Washington, 1926), II, 161–163; on black slaves, see Peter Boyd-Bowman, "A Spanish Soldier's Estate in Northern Mexico, 1642," *HAHR*, 53:1 (Feb. 1973), 95–105 and report of Padre Hernando de Santarén, n.p., n.d. (ca. 1600), Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereafter AGN), Jesuitas, II–4. This practice corresponded to a universal pattern in the Spanish colonies; see Murdo J. MacLeod, "Aspects of the Internal Economy of Colonial Spanish America: Labour; Taxation; Distribution and Exchange," in *Cambridge History of Latin America*, II, 221.

20. Using matrimonial records from Parral, Chantal Cramaussel finds that at least half of the hacienda workers in this area during the second quarter of the seventeenth century were *naborios* attached to the estates; she compares their status to that of yanaconas in Peru. See "Haciendas y mano de obra en la Nueva Vizcaya del siglo XVII: El curato de Parral," paper read at the 46th Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Amsterdam, July 1988, 2–5. The term *naborio* was used variably in the colonial period to convey legal status ranging from slave to free or even legally free but subjected to slavery in practice.

21. West, *The Mining Community*, 48–53; Ignacio del Río, "Sobre la aparición y desarrollo del trabajo libre asalariado en el norte de Nueva España (siglos XVI y XVII)," in *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de México*, Elsa C. Frost et al., eds. (Tucson, 1979), 92–111; Bakewell, *Silver Mining*, 121ff.

22. Visita of Alonso del Castillo to mines of San Diego and Santa Bárbara, June 27, 1646, AHP, r. 1646a, fr. 13–22; West, *The Mining Community*, 48–53.

other forms of coercion including the withholding of wages and emoluments, also characterized mining.²³

If some coercion was necessary to assure a steady work force in the potentially more lucrative mining enterprise, in agriculture the need for it was more pronounced. Although permanent resident work forces did evolve on northern haciendas, these were relatively small; for the most part they consisted of a few skilled workers and imported Indians, either slaves or *naboríos*, who were bound to the hacienda without wages or credit advances. The bulk of agricultural labor, employed in seasonal tasks of harvesting and planting, was recruited through *encomienda* and *repartimiento*. Contrary to the model for the north proposed by Chevalier, debt peonage was not the most common means of labor procurement. In fact, binding large numbers of workers, who would at the very least have to be fed, clothed, and housed, to the agricultural estate was not even desirable.²⁴ The goal was to appropriate sufficient labor at peak times, primarily planting and harvest.

During the first 50 years of Nueva Vizcaya's existence, periodic discoveries of silver deposits west and north of Durango in such places as Santa Bárbara and Topia increased the demand for labor, in the silver mines and on the stock ranches and grain farms which were established to supply the mines. Spaniards continued to use slaves and to import laborers from outside in various binding arrangements, but they also attempted to use the local indigenous groups who were in the early stages of congregation. Franciscans and then Jesuits began to establish missions in the late sixteenth century. In the eastern portion, Franciscan missions congregated Tepehuanes and Conchos in the Santa Bárbara and San Bartolomé districts, while the Jesuits initiated their labors on the western edge. First, they set up missions among the Acaxee and Xixime Indians who inhabited the mining region of Topia, straddling the present-day boundary between Sinaloa and Durango; then they moved into the Tepehuan and Tarahumara areas north of Durango by the 1630s.²⁵

Congregation almost invariably followed the establishment of Spanish mining camps and estates; this process occurred slowly and with mixed responses from Indian groups, whose often receptive initial stance could

23. Martin, "Labor Relations and Social Control in Chihuahua, 1700–1750," paper read at the American Historical Association meeting, Chicago, Dec. 1986.

24. See n. 13.

25. On the Franciscan missions, see William B. Griffen, *Indian Assimilation in the Franciscan Area of Nueva Vizcaya* (Tucson, 1979). The Jesuit missionary provinces are studied in Peter M. Dunne, *Pioneer Jesuits in Northern Mexico* (Berkeley, 1944) and *Early Jesuit Missions in Tarahumara* (Berkeley, 1948) and Susan M. Deeds, "Rendering unto Caesar: The Secularization of Jesuit Missions in Mid-Eighteenth Century Durango" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1981).

shift after a few years to outright rebellion, due both to civilian exploitation and missionary pressure.²⁶ Spaniards sought *encomiendas*, first in lands they discovered as well as among *ranchería* Indians being congregated into larger mission units; later they claimed that their services in putting down rebellions entitled them to *encomienda* grants.²⁷

In Nueva Vizcaya, it should be emphasized, the *encomienda* functioned only as a labor institution. Even after the right to exact personal service from *encomienda* had been abolished in central Mexico (1549), northern *encomenderos* exercised the right to commute tribute payments to labor, although personal service was limited theoretically to three weeks per year.²⁸ The Nueva Vizcayan *encomienda*, then, although a different institution to contemporary Spaniards, functioned as *repartimiento*; the only difference was that it was not a government-regulated exchange of labor for wages. It was used in both mining and agriculture.

Records of early *encomiendas* are rare, but documents from judicial disputes over them in the 1640s contain copies of grants issued for three lives in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²⁹ Many of these *encomiendas* of Concho and Tepehuan Indians were held by landowners in the Valle de San Bartolomé. Other evidence of *encomiendas* in the 1580s and 1590s comes from reports by Jesuits in Topia, where grants of Xixime and Acaxee Indians provided labor in the mines of San Andrés and Topia and even as far away as Santa Bárbara. The very rapid population decline among these Indians by the early seventeenth century was attributed by most contemporary accounts to disease and harsh working conditions. Exploitation is also cited as the reason for the Xixime and Acaxee revolts in the first decade of the seventeenth century.³⁰

The earliest *encomiendas* were drawn from Indian *rancherías* rather than permanent pueblos, and Indian middlemen facilitated recruitment. Subsequent congregation of Indians in missions, where successful, made them more accessible for distribution. Ironically, this revitalized the en-

26. These early revolts occurred often in Nueva Vizcaya: among the Acaxee in 1601, the Xixime in 1609, the Tepehuan in 1611, the Concho in 1644, and the Tarahumara in 1648.

27. Nueva Vizcayan governors were authorized to grant *encomiendas* from the time of the first governor, Francisco de Ibarra. See José Ignacio Gallegos, *Durango colonial, 1563–1821* (Mexico City, 1960), 109–110. Indians taken prisoner in the rebellions were also sold as slaves (Hackett, *Historical Documents*, II, 32).

28. Gov. Diego de Ibarra to king, Oct. 14, 1582, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla (hereafter AGI), Audiencia de Guadalajara, leg. 29.

29. Petition of Pedro Vázquez to Gov. Luis de Valdés, Valle de San Bartolomé, Jan. 9, 1645, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 56–57; lease agreement of heirs of Simón Cordero, Parral, Nov. 1652, AHP, r. 1652c, fr. 1049ff.

30. Report of Jesuit visitor Andrés Pérez de Ribas, June 13, 1617 and report of P. Diego de Alejos, Teguciapa, May 18, 1617, both in AGN, Archivo Provisional, Misiones, caja 2; report of P. Diego Ximénez, San Andrés, n.d., AGN, Jesuitas, III–15.

comienda at the same time that declining numbers of Indians should have made it less efficient because a few encomenderos were able to monopolize the local labor supply. Another factor contributing to the perpetuation of encomiendas, traditionally given in reward for military service, was the continuous warfare which kept supplying new military heroes.³¹ Despite repeated prohibitions, new encomiendas were still being granted as late as the 1660s.³²

As the number of Spaniards demanding labor increased, especially after the Parral silver strike in 1631, encomenderos often rented out their charges. This mere palliative could hardly meet labor needs. Nueva Vizcayan governors of the second quarter of the seventeenth century recognized as much and began the practice of assigning Indian labor in repartimiento. In effect, officials began to limit the prerogatives of encomenderos and landowners in regulating labor exchange.³³ In this case also, the practice of repartimiento escalated at the very time its abolition was ordered in the viceroyalty. Nonetheless, viceregal officials tolerated and regulated the practice in the north, with periodic admonitions to observe the laws limiting the numbers taken from a pueblo, the distances traveled, and the length of service.

Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, realizing that their reduction efforts could redound more to the benefit of Spanish encomenderos than to meet their own growing need for an agricultural labor supply, viewed repartimiento as a compromise for sharing labor. Missions were often located near Spanish farms and ranches in areas with adequate water supply. Missionaries introduced agricultural techniques such as crop rotation, complex irrigation systems, and horticulture to substantial numbers of Indians, thus helping to engender a more skilled labor force by midseventeenth century. Because missionaries followed Spanish miners and settlers to much of this area, they were never able to monopolize Indian labor to the extent the Jesuits did later in Sonora, and were accordingly prepared to tolerate repartimiento drafts of mission Indians for mining and agriculture. Although sharing labor was not their preference, the religious orders recognized that this arrangement offered them some advantages, whereas

31. Capt. Bernardo Gómez to Gov. Enrique Dávila y Pacheco, Apr. 8, 1658, AHP, r. 1657b, fr. 895. Gómez attributed the frequent legal actions concerning encomiendas to the fact that governors had rewarded more soldiers than could be accommodated by existing bands of Indians. Gov. Diego Guajardo Fajardo freely distributed encomiendas after the rebellions of the 1640s; see petition of Francisco Martínez Orejón to governor, Valle de San Bartolomé, June 6, 1655, AHP, r. 1655b, fr. 640–650.

32. Real cédula to Gov. Antonio de Oca Sarmiento, June 22, 1670, in Hackett, *Historical Documents*, II, 201.

33. Real cédula to governor of Nueva Vizcaya, Marqués de Salinas, Mar. 11, 1629, AHP, r. 1652d, fr. 1784–86.

the other options of encomienda and peonage would have allowed civil elites nearly unlimited control over Indians. They were already familiar with the costs of hiring laborers to begin building missions; after paying imported Indian workers to dig irrigation ditches and to prepare fields for planting, they were anxious to develop access to a free labor source as expediently as possible.³⁴ Of course, the demands made by missionaries added to the Indians' burdens unless one judges that the benefits of mission life were compensatory.

Following epidemics of smallpox or measles in every decade after Spanish contact and a particularly severe one in 1639–40, the 1640s and 1650s brought heightened conflict over access to agricultural labor. From the time of contact (between 1560 and 1590), population declined 50 percent by 1650, reaching an overall figure of 90 to 95 percent decline by 1678.³⁵ In addition, several Indian rebellions among the Conchos, Tepehuanes, and Tarahumaras in the 1640s and 1650s temporarily removed these former laborers from the pool, while diverting other Indians, who served as auxiliaries in the campaigns to suppress the rebellions, from productive activities. The Tarahumara Indians staged their first revolt after a smallpox epidemic in 1645. Other revolts followed in 1650 and 1652 after several years of drought, and they were succeeded by new epidemics.³⁶

Labor patterns at midseventeenth century were chaotic. As repartimiento was increasingly employed for seasonal labor, small cadres of resident workers, whose degree of autonomy varied widely, provided year-

34. Evelyn Hu-Dehart, *Missionaries, Miners and Indians: Spanish Contact with the Yaqui Nation of Northwestern New Spain, 1533–1820* (Tucson, 1981), 45–48. The Jesuits responded to charges against their stranglehold in "Apologético defensorio y puntual manifiesto . . . 1657." AGN, Historia 316. On hired labor (*naborios gañanes*), see the accounts in *Cuentas de la Real Caja de Durango*, May 22, 1599, AGI, Contaduría, 980–982. The question of whether missionaries should pay Indians for work on mission lands proved an ongoing one; see decree of Audiencia de Guadalajara, 1671, in Hackett, *Historical Documents*, II, 201, 207 and exchange between Jesuits and Gov. Ignacio José Vertiz y Ontañón, 1735, AGN, Jesuitas, I–11.

35. Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, places the rate for all of Nueva Vizcaya by 1650 at about 54 percent. Comparison of Jesuit counts in 1590 and 1678 yields rates of decline ranging from 90 to 95 percent among the Acaxee, Xixime, and Tepehuan Indians; see Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *Triunfos de nuestra Santa Fe entre gentes las más barbarosas y fieras del nuevo orbe* (Madrid, 1645), III, lib. 9, cap. 2; the 1678 visita report of Juan Ortiz Zapata, *Documentos para la historia de México* (Mexico City, 1853–57), 4th series, vol. III, 301–419 (hereafter *DHM*). Evidence on the role of epidemics in mortality is found in the Jesuit *cartas anuas* of 1598, 1607, and 1608 in AGN, Historia, vol. 19, exps. 7, 9, 10; report of Pérez de Ribas, Tesamo, June 13, 1617, AGN, Archivo Provisional, Misiones, caja 2; reports to padre provincial by P. Nicolás de Zepeda, San Miguel de las Bocas, Apr. 28, 1645; and P. José Pascual, San Felipe, June 29, 1651, *DHM*, 4–III, 130–143, 179–209.

36. Capt. Baltasar de Ontiveros to governor, Dec. 26, 1645, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 25; P. Gaspar de Contreras to P. Prov. Francisco Calderón, Parras, May 1, 1653 and *punta de annua*, P. Gerónimo de Figueroa, San Pablo, June 8, 1662, both in *DHM*, 4–III, 210–222.

round service on haciendas. In some cases, these were workers who had originally been granted for limited service in encomiendas but were now classified as property in estate inventories.³⁷ Resident workers also included black slaves, mestizos, and mulattos, but in Parral after 1650, the majority of hacienda residents consisted of Indian slaves from Sinaloa, Sonora, and New Mexico.³⁸ The practice of renting the services of these permanent workers to other landowners was common; the wages earned went to the owner or his mayordomo. Peons who complained about this practice were considered ungrateful by their *patrones* and often subjected to corporal punishment.³⁹ Skilled workers (*sirvientes*) earned from four to eight pesos per month, more than the norm for hacienda workers in central Mexico. Account books show substantial credit balances to these workers, and this may indicate they were not being paid, a situation which would have limited their mobility. When voluntary or forced labor was remunerated, it was rarely in specie but most often in items of food and clothing which were overvalued.⁴⁰ Lest this description paint a picture which highlights only “unfree” conditions, we should note that some workers were able to move freely from one hacienda to another. Those Indians who cooperated with the Spaniards in putting down rebellions seem to have enjoyed this advantage.⁴¹

Furthermore, some northern Indians, particularly Tarahumaras and Yaquis, actually sought wage labor in the mines. There are indications that mineowners attempted to bind Indian workers by debt, although their efforts did not enjoy much success. Nonetheless, the high degree of mobility does not necessarily mean that Indians who went voluntarily to work in the mines always fared well. In 1651, municipal officials in Parral charged that many Indian wage laborers were dying as a result of terrible working and living conditions in the mining camps and that local priests refused to bury them because they died penniless.⁴²

37. Sale of hacienda by Francisco Cano de los Ríos to Juan Carrasco, San Diego de las Minas, Aug. 18, 1655, AHP, r. 1652c, fr. 980–982; lease agreement between heirs of Simón Cordero and Juan Payán, Valle de San Bartolomé, 1652, AHP, r. 1652c, fr. 1049.

38. Cramaussel, “Haciendas y mano de obra,” 6–8. Indians from those areas are also found in the parish records of Valle de San Bartolomé, but they represent a minority until after 1690; see Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 58–59.

39. Causa criminal contra Francisco de Bustamante, Parral, June 1652, AHP, r. 1652d, fr. 1736–1767; this case refers to the common practice of corporal punishment despite repeated royal prohibition. See also report of Gov. Antonio de Oca Sarmiento to viceroy, Parral, Mar. 12, 1667, Hackett, *Historical Documents*, II, 193.

40. Account books, Haciendas de San Juan y de Bocas, 1660, AHP, r. 1668b, fr. 590–603; West, *The Mining Community*, 73.

41. Testimony of Concho Indians to governor, Parral, Nov. 29, 1652, and June 3, 1660, in AHP, r. 1652d, fr. 1785ff, and r. 1660c, fr. 1692–1724. The lack of overarching indigenous political structures helped ensure that specific revolts would not attract support from all bands or rancherías of a particular group.

Within this spectrum of labor systems at midseventeenth century, disputes over labor escalated. Wheat farmers in Valle de San Bartolomé complained that the governor was assigning their *encomienda* Indians in repartimiento to their neighbors. Miners in Parral sought the restoration of their *encomiendas* which had been broken up by labor drafts for making charcoal and harvesting wheat. In 1648, the governor authorized *alcaldes mayores* to assign repartimientos for public works projects.⁴³ Although miners employed increasing numbers of mestizos and mulattos, local repartimiento Indians were also being sent to the mines.⁴⁴ Documents concerning the draft of Indians from the Jesuit mission of Zape for the Guanaceví mines in 1648 indicate that quotas of laborers for one rotational cycle were calculated on the basis of one-third of the able-bodied adult males, rather than the 2 to 4 percent stipulated by law.⁴⁵

Encomenderos desperately sought judicial redress to salvage their grants from the 1650s through the 1660s, but their efforts were doomed to failure. This was recognized by Captain Bernardo Gómez de Montenegro, a wheat grower in San Bartolomé. The problem, as he saw it, was that in rewarding soldiers for their services governors had stretched the limits of *encomienda* by awarding the same *encomienda* to as many as four or five Spaniards. He spoke from experience, for he had done legal battle with two other *encomenderos*; each claimed control of the same Concho band and each had title, dated 1637, 1645, and 1655, respectively.⁴⁶ The necessity of redefining *encomiendas* after the numbers of Indians assigned in them were successively reduced by rebellions and natural causes also contributed to this chaos.

In 1670, a royal *cédula* directed to the governor of Nueva Vizcaya forbade the practice of granting repartimientos under the title of *encomienda*. That this law was enforced is testimony to the end of the *enco-*

42. Sargento Mayor Juan Martín de Lineras to governor, Real de San Diego, June 15, 1649, AHP, r. 1649, fr. 1484; Lucas Merino to governor, Parral, July 3, 1646, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 54ff; diputados del Real del Parral contra curas de Parral sobre derechos de naborios, Audiencia de Guadalajara, May 15, 1651, Biblioteca Pública de Jalisco, Archivo Judicial de la Audiencia de Nueva Galicia (hereafter BPJ, AJANG), caja 3, exp. 9.

43. Capt. Diego Porras to governor, Parral, Dec. 9, 1645, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 23-25; Sebastián González de Valdés to governor, Parral, July 30, 1646, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 38; decree of Gov. Luis de Valdés, Parral, May 20, 1645, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 14-16. Most of the *encomienda*-repartimiento disputes occurred in May and June at the time of the wheat harvest.

44. *Visita* de Alonso del Castillo a las Minas de San Diego y Santa Bárbara, June 27, 1646, AHP, r. 1646a, fr. 13-22; petition of Indé miners to governor, Sept. 19, 1646, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 38; petition of Alonso de Medina to governor, Parral, Mar. 13, 1641, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 12-14.

45. Petition of Guanaceví miners to governor, Parral, Feb. 8, 1648, AHP, r. 1648, fr. 188ff.

46. This lengthy proceeding is found in AHP, r. 1657b, fr. 820-897.

mienda's viability. No new encomiendas were granted, although disputes over previous grants, such as the incident of 1674 described at the beginning of this article, continued to flare up. Governor José García de Salcedo refused to recognize the encomienda, fined Zubia, and ordered him to pay any Indians who worked for him.⁴⁷

In the 1670s and 1680s, repartimiento drafts grew in number, drawing heavily on Franciscan and Jesuit missions. This increase reflected the expansion of Spanish settlement into new mining areas and collateral acquisition of land. Throughout the region, pressures on mission villages from repartimiento and from internal obligations precipitated flight to zones of refuge in the mountain canyons or to mining towns in search of paid work.⁴⁸ Silver strikes around Cusihiuiriachic opened up Tarahumara territory previously uncolonized by Spaniards. The Tarahumara had never submitted easily to forced labor, although numbers of them had sought work as temporary wage laborers in the Valle de San Bartolomé and in the Parral mines since the early seventeenth century. The labor needs of the new mines made the Tarahumara a prime target for labor brokers who pressed them into service in the mines and in cutting wood for charcoal. Their lands began to be appropriated for agricultural purposes.⁴⁹

In those decades, continued demographic decline also stimulated new land acquisitions along the Conchos and San Pedro rivers.⁵⁰ In the most spectacular case of growth, Sargento Mayor Valerio Cortés del Rey obtained through grants and purchase more than 25,000 hectares along the Conchos river. His cattle haciendas produced much of the beef supplied to mining towns and later became part of the Cortés del Rey mayorazgo established in 1689.⁵¹ Most of the land grabbing, however, contributed to the formation of smaller holdings, ranging from small ranchos to moderately large haciendas of 800 to 4,000 hectares. Very often these holdings grew at the expense of mission villages, whose lands began to be pared. In Topia, the parcels acquired by vecinos tended to be very small, reflecting the subsistence existence of Spaniards in this mountainous region.⁵²

47. See n. 2. For the cédula of 1670 and arguments concerning pay for Indian labor, see real provisión, Audiencia de Guadalajara, Nov. 23, 1670, Biblioteca Pública de Jalisco, Archivo de la Audiencia de Nueva Galicia, caja 4, exps. 1-39.

48. Report of Junta de Guerra to viceroy, Mexico City, Aug. 4, 1704, AGN, Historia, vol. 20, no. 1.

49. Thomas Sheridan and Thomas H. Naylor, *Rarámuri: A Tarahumara Chronicle, 1607-1791* (Flagstaff, 1979), 39-70; individual missionary reports, 1690, in AGN, Archivo Histórico de Hacienda, Temporalidades (hereafter AHH, Temp.), leg. 279, exps. 66, 67, 69, 70, 112-115.

50. *Pestes* were again reported to have taken great tolls among children in 1666 and 1676 (reports of 1668 in *DHM*, 4-III, 223-230, 259 and Ortiz Zapata visita report).

51. Various suits involving the Cortés del Rey mayorazgo are in AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, leg. 120 and AHP, r. 1724b, fr. 731-756; see also AHP, r. 1667, fr. 738-743.

52. Deeds, "Land Tenure Pattern in Northern New Spain," *The Americas*, 41:4 (Apr.

By 1690, proliferating numbers of Spanish landholdings surrounded the missions; orders (*mandamientos*) for repartimiento grew in proportion.

In the 1690s, a series of factors combined to precipitate a crisis in the general economic state of the region which did not begin to be overcome until the second decade of the eighteenth century. At a time of increased demand for labor, famine and epidemic struck. A drought in the first three years of the decade resulted in shortages of wheat and corn. Deaths from a measles epidemic in 1693 were reportedly very high throughout the province, and other epidemics ensued in the next three years.⁵³

During the decade, the Tarahumara revolted several times; the final rebellion was suppressed only at great cost in lives and royal treasury funds in 1698. The Tarahumara revolts laid bare the serious rift between the civil and religious elites, as each group stridently attributed blame for rebellion to the other's exploitative forms of control.⁵⁴ In fact, both were right; the Tarahumara tenaciously resisted coercion no matter what the source. Not that they would not work when they wanted to; nearly all colonial observers commented favorably on their industry. Yet, of all the indigenous groups considered here, the Tarahumara were the most resistant to Spanish intrusions. They were guided by an ethic which emphasized individual initiative and voluntary action in group economic tasks. They drew such strong distinctions between themselves and outsiders that they systematically retreated toward the northwestern barrancas of the Sierra Madre in an effort to avoid contact with Spaniards. When they could not, they were capable of violent resistance.⁵⁵ Elsewhere in the region, missions and haciendas were subjected to increased raiding by nomadic Indian groups to the north and east.

1985), 451-453; registro de un sitio . . . Huejotitlán, Nov. 3, 1670, AHP, r. 1669a, fr. 282-299; petition of Capt. Diego de Quirós, Jan. 1675, AHP, r. 1671a, fr. 379-395; P. Manuel Gutiérrez to padre provincial, Piaba, Apr. 10, 1681, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 278, exp. 39; títulos de tierras de Pedro Beltrán, 1675-1766, Archivo de Instrumentos Públicos, Guadalajara (hereafter AIPG), Tierras y Aguas, lib. 30, exp. 15.

53. Autos sobre la falta de maíz y trigo, Valle de San Bartolomé, 1694, AHP, r. 1694a, fr. 110-135; report of Gov. Joseph Marín to viceroy, Parral, Sept. 30, 1693, AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, leg. 120; orden para que vayan a trabajar . . . , AHP, r. 1693, fr. 13-18. In the Tarahumara missions of Satevó and Santa Cruz, the 1693 epidemic may have killed at least one-third of the residents; this estimate is based on a comparison of missionary counts in 1690 (AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 279, exps. 67, 115) and 1725 (visita report of P. Juan de Guenduláin, May 18, 1725, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 2009, exp. 99).

54. Aclaraciones a las acusaciones del Gob. Juan Isidro de Pardiñas sobre el alzamiento de los Tarahumaras, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City, Archivo Franciscano (hereafter BN, AF), caja 12, exp. 207; Roberto Mario Salmón, "Tarahumara Resistance to Mission Congregation in Northern New Spain, 1580-1710," *Ethnohistory*, 24:4 (Fall 1977), 379-393.

55. On Tarahumara ethnohistory and ethnography, see William L. Merrill, "God's Saviours in the Sierra Madre," *Natural History*, 92:3 (Mar. 1983) and John G. Kennedy, *Tarahumara of the Sierra Madre: Beer, Ecology and Social Organization* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1978).

The shortage of workers resulting from epidemic deaths and the Tarahumara rebellions brought great pressure to bear on the Concho Indians. With their pueblos nearly depopulated by the labor exodus, at the end of the decade the Franciscans petitioned for the return of Indians removed years earlier by repartimiento and even encomienda. The governor allowed a group of Concho Indians to be resettled in the pueblo of San Francisco de Conchos despite landowner protests that many of these Indians had spent their entire lives on the haciendas and despite allegations by the Indian governors that conditions under the *alcalde mayor* and the Franciscans were no better.⁵⁶

In the midst of the subsistence crisis, labor shortage, rebellions, and mining reversals in Parral, elites also succumbed to adversity. Nearly half of the Valle de San Bartolomé's haciendas changed hands between 1696 and 1707. The Cortés del Rey mayorazgo survived only with large loans from a Parral merchant, Cristóbal de Orrantía.⁵⁷ The crisis of the 1690s demonstrated the fragility of the region's economy. A major silver strike at Chihuahua (Santa Eulalia) in 1703 fueled a new boom in mining, temporarily reversing the downtrend, but the landowners continued to be at a disadvantage in competing for labor. By 1715, however, many of them had begun to forge closer alliances with local officials which could be used to ensure a more reliable work force. In that year, a group of San Bartolomé landowners, along with the *alcalde mayor*, petitioned the governor for a solution to the labor shortage. Most had resident workers, numbering between 5 and 20. The problem was seasonal labor. The new governor, Juan Manuel de San Juan y Santa Cruz, had just received a viceregal order calling for an end to forced labor practices.⁵⁸ Given the rapidly growing needs of an economy beginning to reverse the downward trends of the late seventeenth century, he formalized a practice which would be followed by his successors. The governor systematically visited Indian pueblos and counted their able-bodied males. Efforts to resettle fugitive Indians were stepped up, and the basis was now laid for more efficient use of repartimiento.

Labor drafts intensified in the 1720s, providing increasing numbers of labor gangs for agriculture and mining. Demand for labor grew in tandem with the rise in the population of non-Indians in the region. Their num-

56. Petition of Indian governor, Joseph de Neira y Quiroga, Feb. 10, 1699, AHP, r. 1699, fr. 42-49.

57. On the suit against the Cortés del Rey heirs, see AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, leg. 120. See also Keith W. Algier, "Feudalism in New Spain's Northern Frontier: Valle de San Bartolomé, A Case Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1966), 95.

58. This case is in AHP, r. 1715a, fr. 459-521; see also the visita of Gov. Manuel San Juan de Santa Cruz to San Francisco de Cuéllar, Nov. 1716, AHP, r. 1716a, fr. 283-307.

bers increased nearly fivefold between 1700 and 1750, after only doubling in the previous 50-year period.⁵⁹ This greater demand was partly met by modest demographic recovery in many mission villages during the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Most drafts for mines had a specific, temporary purpose such as drainage of a mine shaft or cutting wood for the smelting process, but repartimiento workers were occasionally used for hauling ore. By far the largest number of drafts supplied agricultural labor, primarily for the sowing, weeding, or harvesting of wheat and corn. Careful examination of *mandamientos* during the governorship of Joseph López de Carbajal (1723–27), for example, indicates that certain mission villages must have remained depopulated of able-bodied males during the peak harvest periods. About half of the drafts recorded did not exceed the limit of one month, but the rest ranged from two months to the entire term of the governor.⁶¹

Complaints from the mission pueblos reached the governors through letters from Jesuit and Franciscan superiors as well as from Indian delegations. In some cases, Indians actively resisted the drafts, claiming that they forfeited their own plantings when so many were forced to leave the village at the same time. The distances they had to travel were long and hazardous; returning to their villages during the rainy season often resulted in drownings at river crossings.⁶² In 1722, Father Pedro Hualde reported to the governor that men, women, and children were being taken indiscriminately from his mission of Santiago Papasquiario to work in the mines of Chihuahua, considerably more than the prescribed ten leagues. Unauthorized persons carried off 30 mission residents during Holy Week,

59. Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 168–172.

60. Although the trends varied by village (with some experiencing continued decline), overall population in the Jesuit missions increased about 20 percent between 1678 and 1750. In some villages, the increase may reflect the presence of castas, or the periodic influx of previously uncongregated Indians to replace dead or fugitive Indians. The population information comes from counts made by ecclesiastical or civil visitors and officials and comprises very uneven time-series data: Ortiz Zapata visita report, *DHM*, 4–III, 301–419; Jesuit reports, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 279, exs. 66–71, 112–119; Padrones, Santa Catalina and Santiago Papasquiario, 1707, AHP, r. 1707, fr. 74–81; Guendulaín visita report, May 18, 1725, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 2009, exp. 99; Jesuit visita report, 1731, in Gerard Decorme, *La obra de los jesuitas mexicanos durante la época colonial, 1572–1767*, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1941), 78–82; Razón de las misiones . . . , ca. 1740, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 1126, exp. 4; Balthasar visita reports, 1743–45, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 2009, exs. 20, 42; Jesuit reports to bishop of Durango, Archivo de la Catedral de Durango (hereafter ACD), Varios, Año 1749.

61. Mandamientos de repartimiento, Gov. Joseph López de Carbajal, 1723–27, AHP, r. 1723d, fr. 2554–2561.

62. Report of Jesuit visitor, Juan de Guendulaín, Chihuahua, May 18, 1725, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 2009, exp. 99; letters of Tepehuana padres to bishop of Durango, July 1749, ACD, Varios, Año 1749.

counseling them to say they were going of their own free will.⁶³ In the investigation which followed, Governor López de Carbajal discovered that the *alcalde mayor* had allowed labor recruiters to take Indians from the village, that wives and children were also leaving, that Indians were being kept away for months at a time, and that often they were not paid. But he also learned that many of these Tepehuan Indians were unhappy with the excessive labor demands placed on them by the *padre* himself. Besides providing more than the customary amount of labor on lands cultivated for the upkeep of the mission, Indians were used to carry mail, make adobes, tend cattle, and perform numerous other tasks for which they received nothing. Some of them claimed they preferred to leave the village because it was the only way to supplement their subsistence with needed food and clothing. In this case, the priest and the *alcalde mayor* also argued over which of them would name the Indian officials for the mission. Each wanted control of an Indian governor who would be partial to his needs.

Here, as elsewhere, a reshuffling of contending parties in labor disputes can be discerned in the eighteenth century. Conflicts between landowners became less common, while disputes between missions and *vecinos* increased. Previously, individual landowners competed with one another for scarce agricultural labor; now they began to forge a united front against their main competitors—the religious orders who dominated Indian village life. The landowners increasingly enlisted the support of petty officials, and the number and frequency of repartimiento drafts rose. In addition, judges tended more and more to favor *vecinos* in contests over land and water.⁶⁴ The presence of non-Indians in villages grew.⁶⁵

In 1728, Nueva Vizcaya suffered another severe epidemic of measles, and Governor Ignacio Francisco de Barrutia reported that much of the harvest was lost for lack of laborers. Death tolls were highest in the Tarahumara region.⁶⁶ These disruptions, however, proved minor in comparison to the subsistence crisis of the late 1730s. A protracted drought began in 1737 and was followed in the next two years by an epidemic of *matlazahuatl* (probably typhus). Death tolls in Indian villages from this epidemic

63. *Visita que hizo el Gobernador López de Carbajal a Santiago Papasquiario y disposiciones que dictó*, Apr. 1724, AHP, r. 1722b, fr. 659–687.

64. For example: AHP, r. 1700a, fr. 33–88, r. 1711a, fr. 170–176, r. 1720b, fr. 1373–1376, r. 1727a, fr. 323–357; AIPG, *Tierras y Aguas*, lib. 12, exp. 78, lib. 18, exp. 8, lib. 19, exp. 17, lib. 20, exps. 4, 5; AIPG, *Libros de Gobierno*, vol. 43, f. 28.

65. *Que los españoles no se introduzcan a los pueblos de indios*, Jan. 18, 1718, AHP, r. 1718a, fr. 12–17. This trend was universal, despite the prohibitive legislation; see Magnus Mörner, *La corona española y los foráneos en los pueblos de indios de América* (Stockholm, 1970).

66. Governor to king, Parral, June 4, 1728, AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 110; census of Tarahumara missions, 1728, in AHP, r. 1728a, fr. 157–170.

were about three times higher than those from the measles epidemic of the previous decade.⁶⁷ Governor Juan Bautista de Belaunzarán reacted to the crisis in 1739 with emergency measures. Each *alcaldía mayor* was ordered to survey and impound all grain stores. Because these proved insufficient, the governor solicited grain from areas to the south. Censuses were taken in Indian villages in order to assign all available Indians to agricultural repartimientos.⁶⁸ The governor also addressed the need for a more systematic allocation of manpower by decreeing in 1740 that he alone had the authority to assign Indians in repartimiento, theoretically abrogating the exercise of this authority by *alcaldes mayores* and their *tenientes*. That this decree was largely ignored suggests that there was considerable cohesion among labor users, which enabled them, with the support of their *alcaldes mayores*, to resist higher officials. Local officials (many of them landowners) often received “kickbacks” for their efforts in procuring labor.⁶⁹

In the recruitment of labor, the role of the native brokers also merits consideration, but the evidence is scanty. They received special privileges and exemptions in their communities in return for doing the Spaniards’ bidding.⁷⁰ Although they were constrained by the limits of what the community could bear, they were apparently able to convince at least the other inhabitants of their *rancherías* that without their intervention as arbiters the exploitation could be worse. In the case of band peoples without fixed settlements, the Spaniards depended heavily on *caciques* to round up Indians in remote areas.⁷¹ Although we do not know much about precontact governance within these particular Indian groups, apparently none had a tribal leader. Leadership except in warfare was decentralized, with each *ranchería* or band having its own elders who exercised

67. Burial registers, 1659–1825, Parroquia de Santiago Papasquiario and burial registers, 1715–1825, Parroquia de Santa Catalina de Tepehuanes, in the microfilmed manuscript collection for Mexico of the Genealogical Society of Utah. This epidemic was widespread in Mexico; see, for example, Florescano and Elsa Malvido, *Ensayos sobre la historia de las epidemias en México* (Mexico City, 1982) and MacLeod, “The Matlazahuatl of 1737–38: Some Villages in the Guadalajara Region,” in *Investigating Natural Hazards in Latin American History*, Robert H. Claxton, ed. (Carrollton, GA, 1986), 7–15.

68. AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 104, 186; AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 69, exp. 1.

69. Despacho del Virrey-Arzbispo Juan Antonio de Vizarrón, Mexico City, Sept. 15, 1739, BPJ, AJANG, caja 48, exp. 14; governor to *alcaldes mayores*, May 11, 1740, AHP, r. 1740, fr. 5–7; correspondence between Viceroy Revillagigedo and Franciscan comisario general, Fr. Juan Antonio de Abasolo, 1752–53, BN, AF, caja 15, exp. 274.

70. On the other hand, they quickly lost their status as *gobernadores* if they failed to comply with the *mandamientos*: Quejas dadas contra Nicolás de Valenzuela y Nicolás el Vagre, indios del pueblo de Atotonilco, Santiago Papasquiario, July 18, 1720, AHP, r. 1720b, fr. 1360–1367; 1532–1549.

71. Descriptions of this process are found in documents from the Tepehuan visita of 1651, AHP, r. 1651a, fr. 186–204.

moral authority as opposed to an executive power. In the early period of *encomienda-repartimiento*, before the missionaries imposed a more complex system of officials, it is not clear how the Spaniards selected headmen to do their bidding. If the previous role of leaders was one of protection and guidance with a view to mediating conflict and providing for the well-being of the community, with what authority did those chosen exercise the ability to coerce? And to what degree was their authority eroded by the machinations of priests and *alcaldes mayores* who tried to impose their own candidates?

Changing ecological circumstances no doubt forced some restructuring of indigenous social systems to preserve group solidarity, and this may have included extension or augmentation of executive power across a broader spectrum. Later, the task of the Indian middleman became easier when obligations to the religious community made work outside the missions more attractive. Moreover, it may be that the changing of *ranchería* locations and the complementarity of economic pursuits in different locations constituted a precontact precedent which made seasonal or temporary labor migrations less disruptive either physically or socially.

Modest economic recovery in the region at mideighteenth century did not alter the basic pattern of labor coercion. Although substantial revival of the mining industry did not take place until the 1780s and 1790s, continuous new discoveries kept the industry alive as miners and merchants shifted their operations from one *real* to another. No supravillage Indian rebellions originated within the region in the eighteenth century, although increasing raids from Apaches and other indigenous groups from the north and east resulted in the abandonment of smaller rural settlements. The first three-quarters of the eighteenth century was a period of slow growth in agriculture and mining, during which modest local markets evolved in the main population centers of Durango, Parral, and Chihuahua.⁷² Commercial activity grew in response to demographic gains,⁷³ and the increased production of grain and livestock might have encouraged the development of a more permanent “free” labor force, given the relative scarcity of human resources.

Instead the local elites settled on *repartimiento* as the solution, at least until the later eighteenth century. Landowners and miners were able to evade legal restrictions on forced labor because of their distance from the central government and because that government was more willing to

72. Phillip L. Hadley, *Minería y sociedad en el centro minero de Santa Eulalia, Chihuahua, 1709–1750* (Mexico City, 1975).

73. Michael M. Swann, *Tierra Adentro: Settlement and Society in Colonial Durango* (Boulder, 1982).

tolerate abuses in mining areas with greater potential for profit. The landowning class, a heterogeneous group whose holdings ranged from small ranchos to large haciendas, appears to have achieved only low profit margins, impelling it to economize severely on labor costs. Perhaps one option would have been to encourage a system of sharecropping like the one that evolved in the Bajío.⁷⁴ This system, however, could be advantageous to landowners only when arable land was in plentiful supply. The opposite was true in Nueva Vizcaya, and landowners determined that a source of cheap labor was absolutely crucial.

It was not in their interest to bid up wages by competing for scarce labor; rather, they would be better served by coercing and sharing it as a group.⁷⁵ It was far preferable to bind Indians in arrangements which offered neither wages nor credit advances and which allowed the landowners to employ Indians only when there was work to be done. Repartimiento offered the optimal way to acquire laborers when they were needed in the agricultural cycle without having to retain them in the dead seasons. The repartimiento system was always strained during the wheat harvest; the problem was not so much a general shortage of laborers as a severe shortfall at key times. Still, for much of the eighteenth century, the draft served the needs of grain producers in Nueva Vizcaya.

For the system to work, vecinos had to improve the reliability of the work force by maximizing access to settled Indians, and this meant increasing pressure on missions. In turn, the missionaries challenged provincial and viceregal officials to stem the erosion of their communities. In a 1740 report to the lieutenant governor, the Jesuits described the disruptive procedures and excessive demands of the labor draft which depopulated villages at critical points in the agricultural cycle. The report inventoried the abuses, which included poor dietary conditions, inadequate lodging, excessive workdays, and payment in kind or in notes which had to be redeemed in Parral and Chihuahua.⁷⁶

Labor exoduses were not the only concern; mission lands faced a new assault in 1738 when a *subdelegado de tierras* was created for Chihuahua by the Audiencia of Guadalajara. This official, alleged by the Jesuits to be in league with his compatriots, the heavily Basque elite, challenged the status quo regarding mission landed property with measures which forced

74. Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos*.

75. Wages for permanent residents and for temporary paid labor were already high compared to central Mexico (various accounts, *Haciendas de San Juan y Bocas*, Jan. 1660, AHP, r. 1668b, fr. 59off; petition of San Bartolomé valley landowners, Aug.–Sept. 1715, AHP, r. 1715a, fr. 459–521).

76. Borrador de carta, ca. 1740, BN, AF, caja 12, exp. 210.

the Jesuits to either pay taxes on lands previously considered exempt or forfeit them.⁷⁷ Already, slow but steady usurpation of mission lands by non-Indians had contributed to the process of coercing Indians into the labor market by limiting their means of subsistence. The Jesuits, sensing a losing battle and facing other pressures from viceregal officials, in 1743 offered to secularize all their Topia, Tepehuana, and Tarahumara Baja missions.⁷⁸

For a while, it seemed that this gesture might have been precipitous. The Audiencia in Guadalajara confirmed tax exemption status for at least part of the mission lands, and in 1744 the lieutenant governor recommended to the viceroy sweeping changes in the repartimiento system which would have reduced the leverage of producers and modified the abuses. Still concerned with how to avoid subsistence crises like the recent one, he advocated communal plantings in Indian villages and the storage of grain.⁷⁹ In Mexico City, Jesuit advisors got the ear of newly installed Viceroy Revillagigedo, and he incorporated the 1744 recommendations almost verbatim in an order of October 31, 1746.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, according to viceregal and ecclesiastical visitors, the labor reforms were ignored.⁸¹ The provisions regarding communal plantings did have repercussions in the Franciscan missions, where the corregidor of Chihuahua decided that they could only be applied under his direct supervision; he took over the village lands and placed them under mayordomos.⁸² The ability of elites to make economically rational decisions more attuned to local structural realities continued not only to counterbalance but to subvert royal intent. That fact was confirmed by the official transfer of the Jesuit missions to the diocese of Durango in 1753 and 1754; the mission villages were much

77. Oidor Martín de Blancas to Marqués de la Regalía, Guadalajara, Aug. 12, 1744, AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 106, 113; various letters of Jesuit missionaries, 1743–49, in AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 316, exp. 5, leg. 1126, exp. 3, and in Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de los Jesuitas, Mexico City, no. 1389.

78. The Jesuits hoped to directly link this action with royal support for the expansion of their missions into Alta California (Deeds, "Rendering unto Caesar," 65–86).

79. Teniente de gobernador al virrey, Conde de Fuenclara, Sept. 1, 1744, AGN, Historia, vol. 20, exp. 5. Although the missions always had certain "communal lands" assigned to the upkeep of the mission, they did not have the *cajas de comunidad* of their nonmission counterparts.

80. P. Pedro Retes to P. Joseph Calderón, Santa Catalina, Nov. 27, 1745, AHPM, no. 1673. Jesuit lobbying efforts with viceregal officials were impressive; see Rutilio González Ortega, "La California de los jesuitas" (Doctoral thesis, El Colegio de México, 1973), 172–183. A copy of the viceregal order is found in ACD, Varios, Año 1753.

81. Report of Visitador José Rodríguez Gallardo, Aug. 18, 1750, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 176, exp. 6, fols. 218–268; P. Visitador Agustín Carta to P. Prov. Juan Antonio Balthasar, Chihuahua, June 7, 1751, AGN, AHH, Temp., leg. 2009, exp. 41.

82. Correspondence between Revillagigedo and Abasolo, BN, AF, caja 15, exp. 274; report of Visitador General José Rodríguez de Gallardo, Aug. 18, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 176, exp. 6.

reduced in population and in area after still another ten years of exposure to epidemic (measles in the late 1740s) and to the land-hungry merchants who had profited from the Chihuahua mining expansion.⁸³

The breakup of Indian communities accelerated after secularization. When Bishop Pedro Tamarón y Romeral visited these areas in 1765, he found many of the former pueblos abandoned. Without the religious orders as buffers (however ineffective and exploitative themselves), Indians exercised even less control over their own land and labor. The communities which survived did so in a new guise; non-Indians swamped the native inhabitants, hastening the process of *mestizaje* and cultural absorption. As Indians lost their lands or were unable to cultivate them in the face of demands on their labor and of raids by hostile Apaches, some moved toward the relative security of haciendas as permanent agricultural laborers; others hired themselves out as temporary wage laborers.⁸⁴ The transition to wage labor was facilitated by the intensification of commercial activity fueled by population growth in the late eighteenth century, but that is a story which falls outside this study.

As long as there were even small Indian enclaves to feed on, the repartimiento survived in Nueva Vizcaya. Was this remarkable in any way? A review of the stages of forced labor suggests that in the early stage, during which it coexisted with *encomienda*, repartimiento did not deviate much from the function it served in other poor marginal areas of population in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hispanic America, before sustained demographic decline took its toll. It was slightly more remarkable that repartimiento lasted beyond the midseventeenth century. In the second stage beginning just before midcentury, an unwritten agreement based on expediency allowed agricultural elites and missionary orders to share local labor, while Indians were imported from the west and the north and attached to haciendas in serflike arrangements. This stage lasted until about 1690.

The crisis of the 1690s marks the third stage of repartimiento. Labor scarcity was greatly exacerbated by a conjunction of factors: famine, disease, rebellion, and growing disequilibrium between the Indian and non-Indian population. This crisis pointed up the weaknesses inherent in re-

83. See AIPG, Tierras y Aguas, lib. 27, exp. 37, lib., 28, exps. 75-6, 130-35, 146, 166, 172; *nómina de vecinos del Valle de San Bartolomé*, July 15, 1750, AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 120.

84. Tamarón y Romeral, *Demostración del vastísimo obispado de la Nueva Vizcaya, 1765*, Vito Alessio Robles, ed. (Mexico City, 1937), 62-133; Gov. Joseph Carlos de Agüero to viceroy, Durango, July 5, 1767, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 94, exp. 2; cura de Huejotitlán to governor, Nov. 26, 1767, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 94, exp. 1; land titles in AIPG, Tierras y Aguas, lib. 32, exp. 8, lib. 35, exps. 1 and 13, lib. 41, exp. 43; AGI, Audiencia de Guadalajara, 115.

liance on a haphazardly organized draft labor system and precipitated a reorientation of forces contending for labor.

The fourth stage, beginning just after the turn of the eighteenth century and lasting into its third quarter, was characterized by the revitalization and intensified use of draft labor. Several factors contributed to this renewal. First, efforts by provincial and local officials made labor recruitment more efficient and systematic. The slow Indian demographic recovery in mission villages probably facilitated increased use of draft labor by reproducing greater numbers of laborers in each generation. On the other hand, this advantage may have been offset by the relatively higher rate of growth among the non-Indian sectors that vied for labor surplus. Furthermore, in this period, a significant political realignment produced a coalition which united landowners, whose profit margins were small, with petty Spanish officials and Indian caciques against the religious orders whose missions constituted the main obstacle to their monopolization of Indian labor. The missionaries' first reaction was to protest, and they did win some legal victories. Then, after steady assaults on mission lands had caused their communities to disintegrate further, they yielded control. Finally, and probably most important in this period of slow economic growth, repartimiento still offered the only viable economic option given the low profits and overwhelmingly seasonal needs of the landowners. Only when a regional market began to evolve and the pool of Indian and marginal non-Indian laborers expanded did use of repartimiento decline. In this final stage of draft labor, during the late eighteenth century, work began to lose its predominantly seasonal character as a more dynamic regional commerce increasingly demanded year-round labor employed in wage and peonage systems.

Thus, in this case, an internal (intra-New Spain) core-periphery model does have some application. In the Nueva Vizcayan periphery, coercive practices pervaded labor relations over a long time period. However, in a comparison among marginal areas themselves, and even within the northern Mexican fringe, the transitions from coerced to wage labor do not conform to the same sequential patterns.⁸⁵ Instead, they depend on a variety of specific and local conditions which makes the labor systems quite distinct. Several idiosyncratic patterns are apparent in this Nueva Vizcayan case, in which the durability of rotational forced draft labor was somewhat unique given the demographic base.

First, silver mining did not create over time stable population centers

85. For comparison with Paraguay, for example, see Saeger, "Survival and Abolition." For a northern Mexican comparison, see Cuello, "The Persistence of Indian Slavery and *Encomienda*." In the Mexican northeast, repartimiento was totally bypassed.

with predictable labor needs. Although silver production everywhere was subject to boom-and-bust cycles, boom periods in Nueva Vizcaya were relatively shorter, and their locations were more dispersed, encouraging chaotic, migratory labor patterns in a sparsely populated region. Within the larger competition for workers, agricultural labor occupied a subordinate position. Agricultural elites, who could not compete effectively on a cost basis, increasingly relied on coercion to ensure affordable permanent and seasonal labor, thus perpetuating slavery, *encomienda*, and *repartimiento*.

They were able to do so, despite a shrinking regional population, for several reasons. Resistance by northern Indians to Spanish domination meant that new groups were brought into the Spanish orbit continuously, but over more than a century and often after protracted struggles. The recalcitrance of indigenous groups fueled the continued influx of native workers, "justifiably" enslaved, from beyond the settled frontier. This became a key source of permanent unskilled agricultural labor. The solution to the more difficult problem of securing adequate seasonal labor lay in the mission population. Severe demographic decline might have limited the use of mission labor in *repartimiento* if the mission population had represented a finite pool, but even here replacements could be found from the Nueva Vizcayan band and *ranchería* peoples who resisted by retreating to remote areas, but periodically were congregated, substituting for other Indians who died or fled. The variation in indigenous sociocultural organization and the almost constant threat of warfare also created a more heterogeneous and unstable milieu to which the Spaniards had to adapt, using a variety of coercive methods.

Despite the conventional wisdom that *repartimiento* could only function effectively within more socially differentiated Indian societies that had tribute- and labor-exacting systems before conquest, or within areas of greater indigenous population, the rotational draft system served the needs of the Nueva Vizcayan elites for over a century and a half. For the system to work in this periphery, it required first that nonpueblo Indians become dependent on a structured community. Paradoxically, the *repartimiento* system itself then eroded the community and ultimately induced its inhabitants to seek work elsewhere.