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(translated from the original Spanish

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*MIGRATIONS TO MEXICO CITY
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

Research Approaches

The persistence of certain migratory movements has engendered a growing interest in their historical process. In the case of Mexico City, some recent studies have called attention to the existence of structures and historical trends which help explain contemporary migration (Bataillon, 1972).

A study of the history of migrations makes possible precise observations on the mass population movements produced by great social changes. These changes, in turn, can be studied through an analysis of their effects. Historical analysis will certainly focus on migration as a phenomenon that affects social groups, because the documents—generally indirect—that record these movements throw more light on their causes than on individual motivations. This paper only points to some ways in which these movements might be analyzed, using as sources the municipal *padrones* (population registers) and censuses of the nineteenth century, which include information on places of origin. (A complete list of the *padrones* of Mexico City in the nineteenth century is given in Aguirre and Sánchez de Tagle, 1972.)

At the end of the eighteenth century and during the early years of the nineteenth, the Bourbon government enacted a number of laws that altered the political, administrative, and economic structure of New Spain. These reforms and the extraordinary economic expansion accompanying them resulted in a series of internal events that influenced the destiny of the colony. The Royal Order of Consolidation of 1804, for example, aroused the first generalized reaction of the leading groups in New Spain against the Crown. Four years later these same power groups supported the movement that ended with the removal of the viceroy.

On the other hand, the free trade laws of 1765, 1778, and 1789 broke the monopoly to export and import enjoyed by a handful of merchants. Within the old structure of the colony, the activities of these monopolistic merchants were centered in the cities of the Veracruz-Puebla-Mexico City corridor. In Puebla, furthermore, artisans suffered from the competition of textiles brought in by the free trade provisions. This meant that the zone was extremely vulnerable to structural changes.

Taking into account these disruptions of the traditional sectors, we made a preliminary examination of the information on migrants contained in the Mexico City padrón of 1811 (see AGNM).¹ Since this padrón was conducted about a year after the insurgent uprising of 1810, it was obviously for military purposes and therefore offers examples of the structural dislocations produced by the Independence War.

Data found in the padrón can be used for various analytical approaches. Study of migrants can be approached by analyzing their places of residence. A more refined analysis would examine the factors that induced population movement out of a given region and would especially study the affected social groups. For this paper, information was gathered about a portion of the urban area (see Figure 1) and about certain kinds of residential units; moreover, the analysis focused on migrant families. Confirmation of the results thus obtained clearly would require a parallel study of nonmigrants and of other urban areas.

The urban area that was analyzed presented very different zones. The first of these—situated in the eastern end of the city, around the old quarter of San Antonio Tomatlán—was characterized by *jacal* constructions, or shacks, scattered among livestock enclosures and saltpeter works. The other zone was associated with a larger number of *vecindad* (tenement) constructions and a relatively higher density of population. The third zone—or, more exactly, group of streets—near the *zócalo* (main square) in the center of the city comprised many *casas grandes* (mansions) which housed a substantial number of domestic servants.

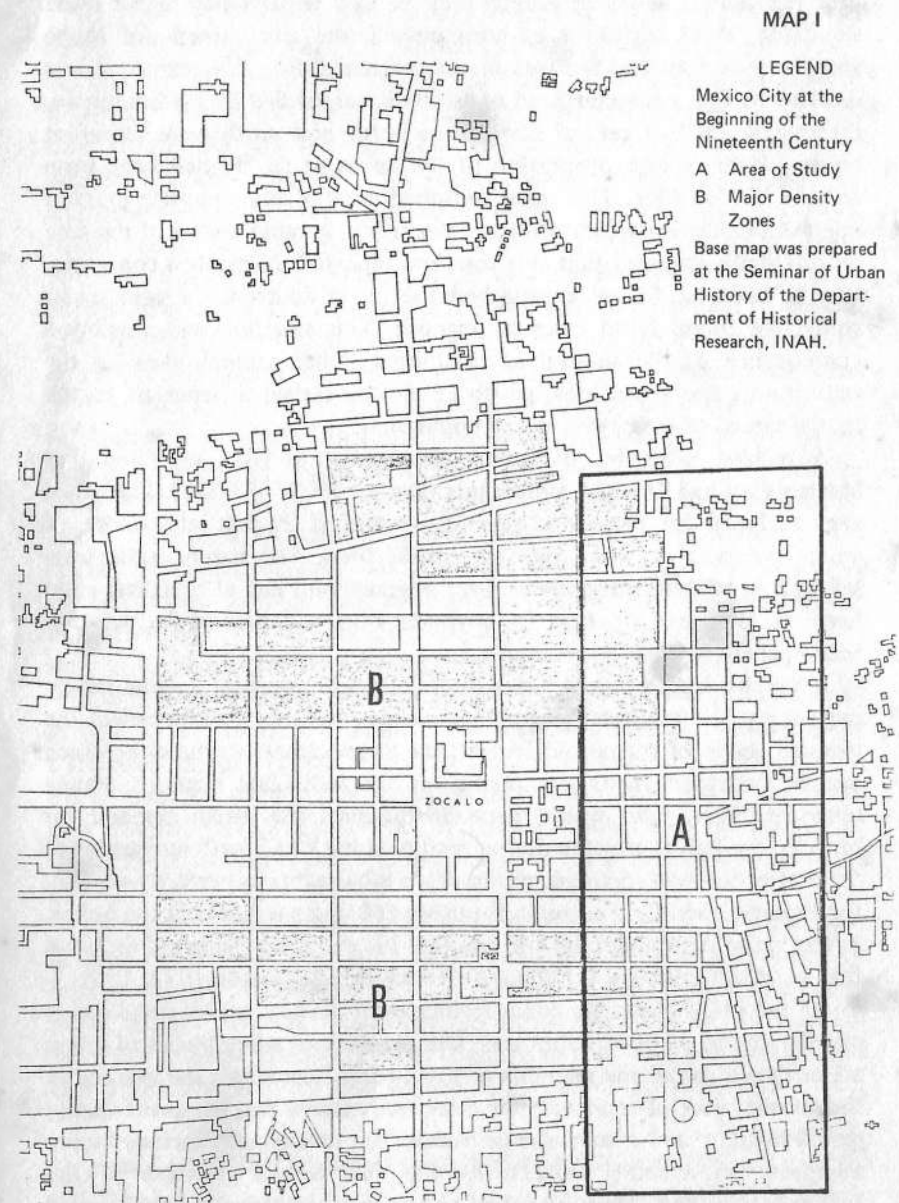


Figure 1. MEXICO CITY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Within these limits, migrants were spatially concentrated. In the zone near the center, which in general may be said to have had higher living standards, those registered as born outside the city turned out to be employed as domestic servants in the mansions. For this reason, it was unusual to find a migrant head of family accompanied by his household. Pressing in on this central zone from north and south were tenement houses. Here, a high proportion of the heads of family had been born outside Mexico City. This zone furnished most of the complete units of migrant families on which we based our work. A rapid review of the data on dwellings suggested that this zone also included the greatest concentration of artisans. As we approached the outer limits of the area under study, we found fewer cases of migrants. This situation was possibly a consequence of the survival of traditional Indian communities on the outskirts of the urban area, which effectively served as frontiers to the spatial spread of the newly arrived population.

A padrón taken by the police department in 1811 indicated that Mexico City had 168,846 inhabitants (Davies, 1972: 481-524). The urban area analyzed for this work covered a total of 20,000 inhabitants, of whom 38 percent were migrants. From these 430 family units were selected in which both spouses were migrants and had at least one child born in Mexico City—that is, migrants who had arrived in the city accompanied by their entire family.²

If we construct a map showing places of origin using our data on family migrations, the resulting geographical design does not strictly reflect the regional scope of migration. In fact, the zones closest to the city, which can be described as starting points for the individual migrants—young unmarried men—who would permanently meet the urban demand for services, are lightly registered. The continual back and forth movement of these migrants was regarded by the city's inhabitants as perfectly normal; for example, when el Periquillo Sarmiento fell into the hands of the police, it was quite natural for him to say that his name was Sancho Pérez and that he was "a native of Ixtlahuaca" (Fernández de Lizardi, 1972: 158).

On the other hand, the zones farther from the city, which stand out as migrant centers, will certainly have less significance when places of origin are analyzed for all the migrants of this period. The longer the journey to the chosen place of residence, the more likely it was that the entire family would migrate, and it may also be because our data already include family migratory movements induced by the first armed conflicts of the Independence War. Thus, an initial approach of historical analysis would be to measure the regional dimensions of migration.

Mexico City's Area of Influence

As shown in Figure 2, the places of origin of the 430 selected heads of family indicate that circa 1810 Mexico City's area of influence was limited to the states adjacent to the capital, the Bajío region, and certain cities in Veracruz.³ Within this area various regions may be distinguished, but the zone around the city forming a belt that contributed a large number of migrants is our interest. This region, which today is part of the metropolitan center, was made up of many towns—Tacuba, Tacubaya, Azcapotzalco, Mixcoac, San Angel, and so forth—located along the banks or on the islands of the old lakes of the Valley of Mexico. It was a densely populated region that was an integral part of the development of Mexico City. *Obrajes* (factories) and brickyards were set up in these communities, which became closely linked to the city through the constant movement of their people to and from the capital. This nearby zone was responsible for seventeen percent of the migration recorded in our sample. Within the sample it would be useful to make two further divisions. One division alone, which had as its center the town of Texcoco on the banks of the lake, contributed six percent of the migrants. The other consisted of a densely populated cluster of small villages located in the northern part of the lake which, because they were close to the city and connected among themselves by roads coming from the Bajío and the principal cities of the state of Hidalgo, formed a network of concentrated settlement.

The area of influence of Mexico City in 1811-1822 seems rather small relative to the extension of national territory. Nonetheless, considering the difficulties in that period of getting from one place to another—that is, considering the distances in terms of time rather than space—that same area assumes greater dimensions. In 1810 a traveller took six days to go from Perote to Puebla and two more days to reach Mexico City (Comyn, 1843).

Each one of the regions within the area of influence of the capital was defined by the existence of a main population nucleus surrounded by smaller villages. As we approach the capital, we find a great number of small villages without being able to identify—except in the case of Texcoco—large population centers. It was from this densely populated area that workers came to try their fortune in the largest city of Mexico.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISTANCE AND OCCUPATION

On the basis of data collected from the 430 heads of family, a series of maps was drawn up indicating patterns of a possible correlation between

TABLE 1
REGIONAL MIGRATIONS

Zone	M	%	Zone	M	%
Puebla-Atlixco	182	25.3	Chalco-Amecameca	36	5.0
Tula-Querétaro	88	12.2	Morelia	29	4.0
Environs of Mexico City	82	11.4	Ecatepec-Teotihuacan	25	3.4
Pachuca-Tulancingo	74	10.3	Jalapa-Perote	15	2.0
Toluca-Tenango	62	8.6	Mezquital Valley	15	2.0
Bajío	49	6.8	Cuernavaca-Cuautla	10	1.3
Texcoco	46	6.4	Apan Plains	5	0.7

NOTE: M stands for migrant heads of family.

the places of origin of the migrants and their occupations. The results showed a sharp differentiation of occupational structure and a relationship between these types of occupation and distance from place of birth.

In Mexico City's area of influence, the regions that sent the greatest number of migrants with occupations connected with the liberal, administrative, and artistic professions were the cities that followed the capital in importance: Puebla, Jalapa, Morelia, and Querétaro. From these cities came the bulk of the migrants with occupations that could be distinguished from the crafts and service activities and that, moreover, could claim a higher status. Notably absent in the spatial distribution of the places of origin of these migrants were localities within the region closest to the city.

Just the opposite occurred with the places of origin of the city's inhabitants whose occupations were linked to construction (masons, and adobe and brickmakers) and the service activities (water carriers, carters, and caretakers). The localities that supplied the greatest number of these kinds of migrants were found in the region near Mexico City, in the eastern and northern parts of the valley.

We should finally point out that the maps showing the distribution of other occupations such as artisans did not exhibit a differentiated pattern of places of origin but, rather, a scattering of this group throughout Mexico City's area of influence.

The general tendency that emerged enabled us to establish a primary correlation between the migrant's occupation and his place of origin. Here, distance indicated only certain relations between Mexico City and its area of influence. Nearby villages, more dependent on the city, provided

MAP 2. MIGRANT FAMILIES TO MEXICO CITY

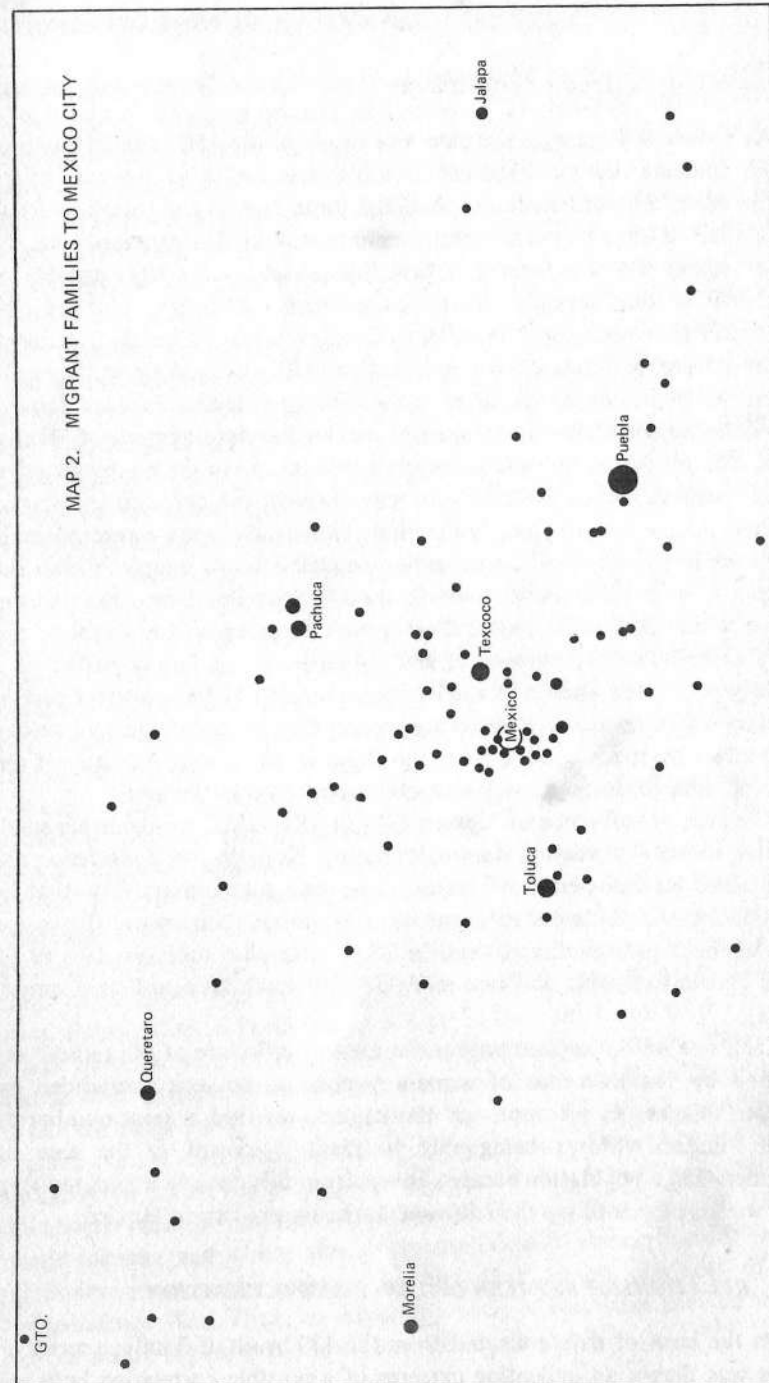


Figure 2. MIGRANT FAMILIES TO MEXICO CITY

unskilled urban labor and domestic servants; whereas the more remote centers, which had developed more autonomously, furnished the skilled workers. This also highlights the relationship between the migrant's occupation and the hierarchy of his place of origin. The more important cities furnished most of the population that was engaged in the better-paid professions, while the reverse was true of the villages and small towns closely tied to Mexico City.

*RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DWELLING AND OCCUPATION
AND PLACE OF ORIGIN*

Until now the starting point of our analysis has been the migrant's place of origin. We shall go on to approach the same problem from the opposite standpoint of the migrant residing in the city. To do this we analyzed two specific cases and we added another variable—the type of dwelling—to the two we had already used.

For this purpose, two dwelling units were chosen: the *vecindad* and the *jacal*. Payno (1971) vividly describes the first:

It was a one-story house with more than thirty rooms, all occupied by thieves . . . a gate . . . a second patio where there was a deep well . . . many rooms were in ruins because the owner did not want to rebuild the house and no rent collector dared enter.

The second type of dwelling consisted of a series of rooms constructed of wood or woven branches, usually occupied by peasants and people of limited means who farmed plots of land.

Once the dwelling units had been established, the residents were listed both by place of origin and occupation. In the case of the *vecindad*, the correlations showed a separation of artisans from service and building activities. The artisans occupying the dwellings under study came from the southern and eastern regions of the capital's area of influence (Puebla-Tlaxcala, Chalco-Amecameca, Texcoc, and Mineral del Monte-Tulacingo). From a regional standpoint, use of the new variable resulted in the same dispersion that had been noted when the places of origin had been located within the area of influence of Mexico City, but with a clear tendency to concentrate in the intermediate zones. The relationship between the migrant's place of origin and the location of the *vecindad* suggests a similar process in other parts of the city. These migrants tended to reside around the points where they had entered the city. (The same observation was made by Bataillon [chapter 5] but for a much smaller city.)

in the hope that the status of the head of family would be improved by changing residence. This category included the few cases registered of merchants and lawyers from the interior of the country. For research purposes it is much more interesting that, in general, these families were examples of movement when adverse circumstances in the original place of work had exhausted all other possibilities of survival. Information of this kind is associated more with migrations of "expulsion" than of "attraction."

TIMES OF ARRIVAL

To prove this hypothesis, the "times of arrival" of migrants to Mexico City were analyzed.⁷

Although the resulting curve in no way reflects the magnitude of the migration in each year—since it is affected both by mortality and by the separation of families when the older children leave to establish their own homes—it does reveal periods of increase which should be analyzed in detail.

TABLE 2
TIMES OF ARRIVAL

Key: *M* = Migrant heads of family; *Md* = Migrant dependents; *T* = Total persons

<i>Year</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>T</i>
1781	2	2	4	1797	7	7	14
1782	—	—	—	1798	14	17	31
1783	1	1	2	1799	20	23	43
1784	—	—	—	1800	20	22	42
1785	—	—	—	1801	21	26	47
1786	—	—	—	1802	25	30	55
1787	3	3	6	1803	26	31	57
1788	1	1	2	1804	30	33	63
1789	3	3	6	1805	14	15	29
1790	3	3	6	1806	23	33	56
1791	3	3	6	1807	29	40	69
1792	11	12	23	1808	36	54	90
1793	3	3	6	1809	31	60	91
1794	4	4	8	1810	94	239	333
1795	3	4	7				
1796	3	3	6	Total	430	672	1102

NOTE: Deduced from the age of the oldest child born in Mexico City to a migrant couple.

When service and construction activities were listed, it was found that migrants came from villages on the outskirts of the city and from the northern region of the Valley of Mexico, a result which agreed with our earlier observations. Furthermore, the use of dwellings as an element of analysis permitted distinctions to be made with regard to the status of the migrant's occupation, which had not been possible earlier using the relationship between distance and occupation. In this sense, it may be said that the two approaches were complementary.

From our analysis of the jacal, we could observe that most of the occupants of this type of dwelling came from places very close to the city and that they were engaged in farming and in the service and construction activities. This once again confirmed that most of the low-paid jobs were filled by migrants from nearby localities.

ANALYSIS OF FAMILIES

The 430 migrant families selected as the basis for these analyses were divided into two groups. The first group was composed of families in which both spouses were migrants—preferably from the same place to increase the probability that the marriage had not taken place in Mexico City—and in which there was a child born in the city (72.7 percent). On an average, this group had 2.08 children per family and the head of family had migrated at 28.4 years of age.⁴

A second group, 27.2 percent of the total cases studied, was composed of migrants who had children born in places outside Mexico City and at least one child born in the city. Within this second group were found thirty cases of "stepwise" migration.⁵ In contrast with the preceding group, the average number of children among these migrant families rose to 2.94 and the average age went up to 32.4. The average age of migration in all probability reflected the age at which the final move to Mexico City was made. To refine these data, special attention was given to cases from which it was possible to infer the age of the individual when he first moved, and this resulted in a substantial decrease to 24.8 years.⁶ The differences would appear to indicate various patterns of behavior for the migrant families in the long process of their incorporation into city life. Nevertheless, no conclusions can be reached before undertaking a similar analysis of groups of nonmigrant families.

In itself the selection of family units as a basis for analysis of these movements indicates that at least two different factors were involved in migration. On the one hand, there was the decision to migrate with family

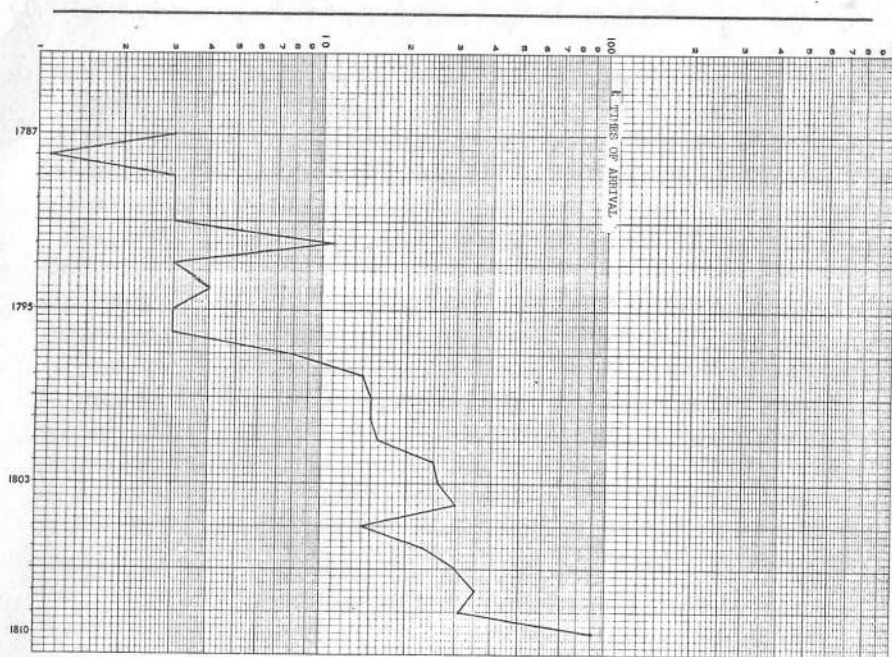


Figure 3.

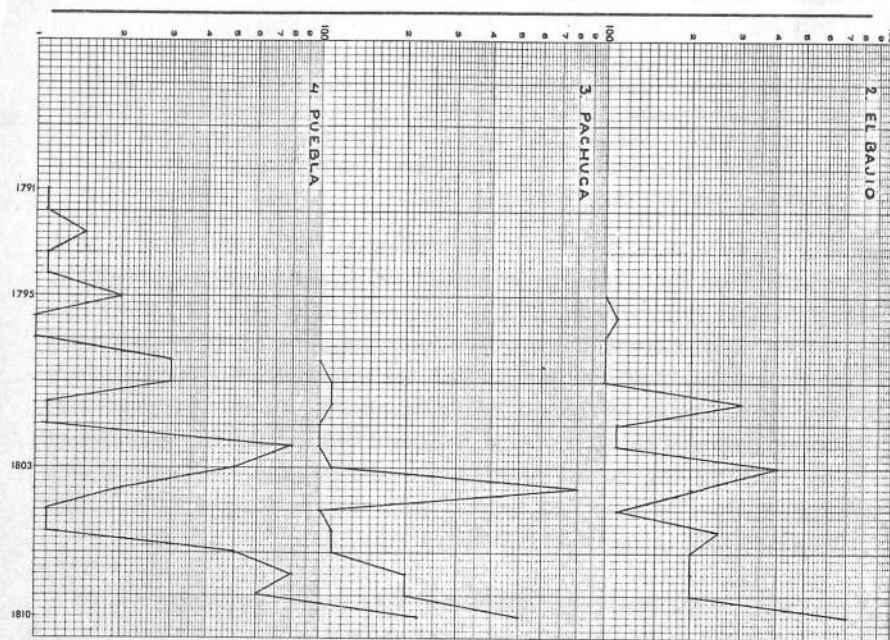


Figure 4.

In spite of the general tendency of the curve (in which later dates appear to be more represented than earlier ones), there is an evident acceleration of this type of family migrations—from 31 to 94 cases—after 1808, precisely at the time of the first disorders which were to culminate in the War of Independence. Furthermore, if not only heads of family but dependents are included in the analysis, the number of cases increases from 91 to 333.

If the census data indicate to us the relation between migratory movements and social factors, other historical documents tell us about the personal motivations that led some of these migrants to change their place of residence. For example, a pamphlet published in 1832 (Mora) contains this dialog between a rancher and his son:

Rancher: I was only waiting, son, until you had had enough schooling so that we might go back to our land; the Hacienda has sent me word of the restoration of my farm, which was in ruins when I left and from which I have received no income during all these years that I have been away. . . . Now that you are thirteen or fourteen years old and you know how to read and write, which is what matters, you can become a rancher, for God has given you an Hacienda and a good House.

Son: . . . But I want to know why you left the Hacienda to become a merchant?

Rancher: In 1810, before you existed in this world, Father Miguel Hidalgo in the village of Dolores called for Mexico's liberation. Therefore, I made many loans of royal seeds [sic] to our military leaders, and because of this the troops of Viceroy Calleja set fire to my Hacienda, burning it to a shell. This forced me to reside in Mexico, but now that I have learned that my farm is restored, I want to return to live there.

The above text confirms that the increase in family migration in 1810 was influenced by, among other things, the first regional battles of the Independence War.

Although we cannot measure the dimension of this type of situational migrations, the curve records at least two other significant movements before the definitive upswing of 1810. The earliest seems to have occurred between 1788 and 1804, the other between 1796 and 1804. It may also be noted that the low points of the curve in 1788 and 1805 reflect high mortality—the first date is associated with the epidemic of 1787—rather than a reduction in migration (Cooper, 1965).

One way to test whether or not this kind of information reflects situational migrations is to divide the total curve into components of

regional migrations. Curves 2, 3, and 4 combine three separate examples of application of the same data. For this analysis, we chose the clear-cut case of situational migration from the Puebla area (which represented 24 percent of the migrants of the sample) for the purpose of comparing it with the cases of the Bajío and of the mining region of Pachuca.

The curve of the Bajío seems to indicate a fairly permanent flow into Mexico City, which accelerated only after 1810. This situation arose from the particular function of this zone, where there were many more alternative internal movements (Moreno Toscano, 1974).

The Puebla zone, to the contrary, exhibits two important cycles of population expulsion. One took place between 1801 and 1804 and the second began in 1806-1807 and continued rising until 1810. In both movements there was a predominance of migrants who had been working in the textile industry. It seems, then, that both points correspond to a single movement resulting from the long crisis in the craft industries already referred to, which had begun earlier and which intensified after local markets were opened to the foreign merchandise introduced by the free trade system.

The final disintegration occurred in 1810 when normal trade between Veracruz and Puebla was interrupted by insurgent battles. A description of the area in 1813 (Comyn, 1843: 469) eloquently describes the causes of this situational migration to Mexico City.

The war and the epidemic it produced have so devastated the province of Puebla that entire localities have disappeared and a fifth of its inhabitants have died, leaving no one in the desolate countryside to reap the last harvest. . . . Many workers have abandoned their shops to join the insurgents; and many of those who have chosen to remain loyal to the government are without work and live in wretched conditions.

The curve that corresponds to the arrival of migrants from the Pachuca area shows an increase in the arrival of migrants from this zone between 1803 and 1805. It is evident that this out-migration was associated with the long mining crisis that began in 1801 and continued until after 1824. We know, for example, that the mines of Real del Monte, which produced six million pesos in 1801, barely produced 500,000 pesos in 1809 and 152,200 in 1819 (Ramírez, 1884: 465).

DURATION OF MIGRATION

If analysis of the data indicates when the migration occurred, the same source can suggest how long the migration lasted. Table 3, which shows

the duration of the first migratory movement of people whose final destination was Mexico City, illustrates the slow rhythm of colonial life. On an average, the interval between two migratory movements was seven years.

The data also make it possible to relate the rhythm of these geographical movements to the occupations of heads of family. At least two distinct patterns can be found in the movements of the selected families.

TABLE 3
DURATION OF THE FIRST MIGRATORY MOVEMENT

<i>Intervals (in years) 1st and 2nd Movements</i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Place of Origin</i>
1	1	Textile worker	Montealto (D.F.)
2	2	Caretaker; domestic servant	Chalco (Méx.)
3	3	Laundress; mason; herdsman	Morelia (Mich.), Guadalupe (D.F.), Cosamaloapan (Ver.)
4	2	Mason	Chalco (Méx.), Morelia (Mich.)
5	3	Cobbler	S.J. del Río (Qro.), Actopan (Hgo.)
6	5	Goldbeater; textile worker; carter; blacksmith	Guanajuato (Gto.), Huejotzingo (Pue.), Texcoco (Méx.), Tepeji, Celaya (Gto.)
7	1	Coachman	Querétaro (Qro.)
8	2	Textile worker; administrator	Real del Monte (Hgo.), Texcoco (Méx.)
9	2	Textile worker; merchant	Puebla (Pue.), Tamiagua (Ver.)
10	2	Coachman	Atzacapozalco (D.F.), Toluca (Méx.)
11	2	Wheelwright; minter	Texcoco (Méx.), Puebla (Pue.)
12	2	Plowman; textile worker	Tepeaca (Pue.), Tlaxcala (Tlax.)
13	1	Silversmith	Cholula (Pue.)
14	1	Cigar maker	Cuernavaca (Mor.)
16	1	Caretaker	Guanajuato (Gto.)

The movements that occurred at short intervals of one to four years were associated with low-income occupations such as masons, domestic servants, laundresses, and mule drivers. This pattern defined a social group of low income but of high geographical mobility, which, generally speaking, did not signify any rise in socioeconomic status for the migrant after his arrival in Mexico City. He belonged to that group of persons described in contemporary literature who were constantly changing jobs, who were jacks of all trades and masters of none, and who had very limited social mobility.

Another pattern corresponded to those who, after spending five and even ten or more years in an intermediate domicile, migrated for a second time. This group had less geographical mobility and was mainly composed of artisans. Furthermore, it may have included those for whom the change of residence meant a higher occupational status, as in the case of the merchant and public administrator who would gain social prestige by conducting their activities in Mexico City. Nevertheless, we should recall that most of the migrants analyzed were "pushed" by specific circumstances in their region. It is unlikely that these migrants would have risen in status when they changed residence, but rather to the contrary. The age of arrival (over 30) alone indicates that it would have been difficult for them to adapt to new conditions, because at that time a person's status was defined precisely between the ages of 20 and 30 (Brading, 1972: 460-480). Furthermore, there would have been corporative barriers to overcome, especially in the trades that had been organized into guilds. These migrants might therefore have been unemployed for long periods until they could enter a trade, for there was practically no way for them to choose a new activity (in the literature of the period, looking for work was synonymous with looking for one's "destiny").

Conclusion

These and other findings, collected almost exclusively on the basis of information on family units contained in the old censuses, open broad possibilities for the social study of migration during the nineteenth century. Such data permit zones of permanent migration to be differentiated by analyzing the relationship between the geographical distance of the migrant's place of origin and his occupation. Similarly, it would be possible to establish the final outcome of the migrant's incorporation into urban life as well as certain factors in situational migrations and their relationship with the development patterns of the society as a whole.

NOTES

1. This data is currently being prepared for computer processing in the Seminar of Urban History of the Department of Historical Research, INAH.
2. This includes some families in which the youngest child—if not more than two years old—had been born outside Mexico City.
3. The map was designed to show the last place of residence of the head of family, which did not always correspond to his place of birth. In most cases, the last place of residence of the head of family was considered the place of birth of his youngest child not born in Mexico City.
4. By subtracting the age given in the census of the oldest child born in Mexico City.
5. For example: head of family and wife born in Tlaxcala, older children born in Puebla, youngest child born in Mexico City; or head of family born in San Juan del Río, wife and oldest child born in Real del Monte, younger children born in Mexico City.
6. For example: a textile worker born in Huetjotzingo migrated first to Puebla when he was at least sixteen years old and arrived with wife and children in Mexico City about 1808, at the age of 22.
7. Curve was drawn by subtracting the age of the oldest child, born in Mexico City of two migrant parents, from 1811 (year of census).

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