

Una Virgen mexicana:  
Los usos del simbolismo,  
folklore y etnicidad  
en la creación de la  
identidad mexicana\*  
/ A Mexican Virgin:  
The uses of Symbolism,  
Folklore and Ethnicity  
in the Creation of  
Mexican Identity

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RESUMEN

Este artículo argumenta que los mitos, leyendas y cuentos populares jugaron un papel fundamental en la creación y desarrollo de una identidad mexicana. Los trabajos de estudiosos como David Brading, Enrique Florescano y Anthony Pagden, entre otros, junto con las fuentes primarias de la época colonial, como el *Teatro de virtudes políticas* de Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora y *Storia antica del Messico* de Francisco Clavijero, se analizan en este ensayo. Por lo tanto, este segmento habla de cómo se utilizaron los mitos y leyendas indígenas por parte de la élite criolla de para una identidad mestiza/híbrida que tuvo una fuerte influencia en los discursos del nacionalismo y la formación de la identidad. El papel de la Virgen de Guadalupe como símbolo clave también se discute en este ensayo.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Nacionalismo, identidad mexicana, Virgen de Guadalupe, folklore, mitos y leyendas indígenas, criollos, mestizos, época colonial.

ABSTRACT

This article argues that myths, legends, and folktales played a pivotal role in the creation and development of a Mexican identity. The works of scholars such as David Brading, Enrique Florescano, and Anthony Pagden, among others, combined with primary sources from the Colonial period, such as Sigüenza y Góngora's *Theatro de virtudes políticas* and Francisco Clavijero's *Storia antica del Messico*, are analyzed in this essay. Thus, this piece discusses how indigenous myths and legends were used by the criollo elite to create a mestizo/hybrid identity that had a strong influence in the discourses of nationalism and identity formation. The role of "La Virgen de Guadalupe" as a key symbol is also discussed in this essay keywords

KEYWORD

Nationalism, Mexican identity, Virgen de Guadalupe, folklore, indigenous myths and legends, criollos, mestizos, colonial period.

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Many scholars have argued that myths and symbols create a sense of identity in different cultures. The Mexican case was proved no exception. The myths and symbols that created a sense of identity derive from Colonial times (either *criollo*<sup>1</sup> and/ or *mestizo* identity). For the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica, myth and prophecy were two very significant and important concepts. In this article I argue that myths, legends, and folktales have played a very significant role in the creation and development of a Mexican identity. Using the works of scholars such as David Brading, Enrique Florescano, and Anthony Pagden, among others, combined with primary sources from the Colonial period, I discuss and analyze how indigenous myths and legends were used by the *criollo* elite to create a *mestizo* identity that had a strong influence in the discourses of nationalism and identity formation. The role of La Virgen de Guadalupe as a pivotal symbol is also discussed in this essay.

The Conquest of Mexico, as David Brading argues, began in myth and ended in prophecy. He affirms that “no matter how impressive their empire was, the Mexica preserved the memory of their origins in elaborate codices, which insisted that it was Huitzilopochtli who had guided them on their long journey from the barren steppes of the north to the fertile valleys of the Anáhuac.”<sup>2</sup> Myth helped them to remember their origins and their end. When the Spaniards arrived, Moctezuma thought that they were messengers from Quetzalcoatl who came to inform them of the end of the Mexican Empire. Cortés interpreted these myths as a cession of sovereignty and immediately sent a letter to the King telling him that the Indians had recognized him as their King. It is obvious that the collapse of Tenochtitlan was partly cast from the Aztec prophecy of final catastrophe.

Enrique Florescano, in his books *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to the Independence* (1994) and *Mitos mexicanos* (1995), stresses that myth has been and will continue to be the ideal instrument to show the hidden collective aspirations of a society or group. Myth also transmits the group’s shared fears. Florescano states that Indian and *criollo* constructions created a mixed interpretation of the history of the indigenous mythic and European religious origins that combined the different memories into a single version that could be interpreted as the collective memory of those born in Mexico. This manifested itself as *criollo-mestizo* nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

Myths were not present only in the minds of the natives. Myths were very important elements in the minds of the Conquerors. In this respect

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<sup>1</sup> Spaniards born in Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Brading, David, *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History*, Cambridge University, Centre of Latin American Studies, 1984, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Deans Smith, Susan, “Culture, Power and Society in Colonial Mexico”, *Latin American Research Review* 33, University of New Mexico, 1998, p. 263.

Brading states that, “it was the same vein of apocalyptic prophecy, so influential in early sixteenth century Europe, which moved the Franciscans in Mexico to interpret the conversion of the Indians as a possible sign of the advent of the Millennium.”<sup>4</sup> Myths help people to know more about their origins and their end. Myths help to understand the world better, the interpretation of time, human happening, and historical development.<sup>5</sup>

*Criollos* were gradually building up their own image of Mexico, or of their particular portion of it, as a unique homeland. No matter how much *criollos* depended on Spain for its architecture, literature, and general culture, their creole patriotism also succeeded in developing an intellectual tradition that was “original, idiosyncratic, complex, and quite distinct from any European model.”<sup>6</sup> Mexico was the only portion of Spanish America where *criollos* began, in the seventeenth century, to build patriotism solidly based on the pre-conquest indigenous past, and only there did figures of the independence movements echo such concepts. The same possibilities existed in writings of Peru, but did not coalesce. Anthony Pagden, in “Identity Formation in Spanish America,” shares the Brading thesis that the patriotic sentiment that started to grow in the *criollos* was increased by the control and power that the Peninsular Spaniards had over the rest of the population. This situation created disappointment, particularly in the *criollo* group (a group with whom this paper mainly concern). It was this very feeling that helped them to develop a new identity that was moving away from there European one.

The patriotic sentiment that started to grow in the Spanish population born in Mexico (*criollos*) was constantly increased by the control and power that the Peninsular Spaniards had over the rest of the population. This situation created a lot of disappointment, particularly in the *criollo* group. The most important public manifestation of this disappointment was the abortive attempt to revolt against the Viceroy in 1565-1568 led by Martín Cortés, son of Hernán Cortés. Nevertheless, this attempt was a failure and the uprising never took place, it was preceded by a dramatic manifestation of ritual language and a *criollo*'s vision of themselves and the relationship with the place they were part of. Anthony Pagden comments on this issue:

One night two prominent members of the conquistador elite, Gil González de Avila and his brother Alonso, staged a procession through the streets of Mexico City. Dressed as Mexican chieftains they marched to Cortés house, followed by a group of masked retainers garbed as Indian warriors. Cortés opened the gates of his house to them and the brothers handed him a crown of flowers bearing the inscription, ‘do not fear to fall by this

<sup>4</sup> Brading, 1984, *op. cit.*, nota 2, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> See Florescano, Enrique, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to the Independence*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1994, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> Brading, David, 1984, *op. cit.*, nota 2, p. 5.

act you shall rise higher.’ Cortés accepted the crown and then withdrew. The ‘Indians’ then dispersed. To the royal judges (oidores) the meanings of both the charade and the inscription of Cortés crown were clear enough. *The Avila brothers had been reenacting the submission of Moctezuma to Cortés’s father...* Whereas the father had still been able to call upon real Indians, the son was limited to whit men in disguise; but whether in reality or in dramatic reenactment, it was clear that all involved in the eyes of the conquerors and their offspring, if nowhere else, participation in the conquest, whether direct or indirect, conferred a legitimate right to independent political action.<sup>7</sup>

The *criollos* in the sixteenth century, as members of a feudal aristocracy, drew their culture from an attachment to the land. Most of their claims were based on the fact that Cortés had received the Aztec Empire from the hands of its last legitimate ruler,<sup>8</sup> and this was one of the aspects on which the early conquerors based their argument to claim the Mexican land. By the middle of the seventeenth century, this group had developed a clear sense of belonging to a culture that in many respects was no longer part of their ‘mother country.’<sup>9</sup> In the Eighteenth century, and influenced by the decline of the indigenous population, the Ancient Aztecs, with whom the *criollos* had encountered their legendary battles, became quickly mythologized. For it was very important to have a ‘heroic’ Indian past to the “imagery that made up so large part of the *criollos*’ vision of their own history as self-aware people [...] the Indians, both the ancient and modern, were perhaps the most important single element in the *criollo* interpretation of the New Spain and this in the creation of their own identity.”<sup>10</sup> It is clear that the *criollos* wanted to take for granted an ancient Indian past that would give them an independent historical identity.

Before I discuss some of the myths that created the most significant influence in the creation of Mexican nationalism, it is important to mention the role of another group that had also influenced this process, the *mestizos* (a person with Spanish and Indian blood). In the *mestizo* writings of this time we find a very close relationship between myth and history. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, descendant on his mother side from the kings of Texcoco who assisted Cortés in the enterprise of the Conquest and the Tlaxcalan Diego Muñoz de Camargo were two of the Mexican *mestizos* who argued that the true Mexican society was to be a *mestizo* one, a hybrid culture mixing Spanish laws and the Christian religion with Indian customs.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Pagden, Anthony, “Identity Formation in Spanish America” in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 54-55.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 55-58

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

In their historical writings, they employed all kinds of literary genres such as myths, legends, folktales, and so on, instead of traditional historical documents or scientific explanations (the thinkers of the Enlightenment would criticize this approach later). Both authors shared the same interest in re-writing their pre-Hispanic history. Like the Spaniards, they used the same kind of narrative and rhetorical strategies. Ixtiloxochitl's *Sumaria relación* and Muñoz Camargo's *Historia de Tlaxcala* show that the chronicles written by the Spaniards presented a lack of understanding of the language and culture of the Indian. They pointed out that living and speaking the language is not enough to understand the culture. The fact that they were part of both cultures gave them some kind of agency to talk about their history. Pagden argues that these works are "a plea made on the recognition of the services rendered. But they are a plea on behalf of an entire race."<sup>12</sup> They state for the rights of the Indians, of their traditions. However, during this time, the *mestizos* had a small influence in society. The white elite did not give them space to make their voice heard.

One of the most influential scholars of that time who contributed to the creation of 'the *criollo* nationalism was Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. He regarded all myths as garbled versions of true historical events. He gave to the Indians "an impeccable Old World pedigree and made them the heirs to the myths and hence to the symbolic history of the ancient Greek."<sup>13</sup> Sigüenza y Góngora talks about the mythical Indian and claims that the *criollo* descendants of the conquerors were the beneficiaries of "a Mexican ancient history." Sigüenza y Góngora points out that the *criollos* had their own classical antiquity, similar to and as fantastical and instructive as that of Greece and Rome.<sup>14</sup>

Sigüenza y Góngora identified St. Thomas as the Indian hero and god Quetzalcoatl. A number of coincidences supported his case: "The Indian god was always described as a bearded, white hero, who had taught the arts of agriculture and peace at Tula before departing across the Western seas promising one day to return. By what appeared to be providential arrangement Cortés, arrived in Mexico during the very year the Mexican calendar devoted to Quetzalcóatl, a coincidence which ensured his welcome by Moctezuma"<sup>15</sup> This identification was so convincing that in the next century many scholars of ancient Mexico such as Mariano Veytia and Lorenzo Boturini approved and supported the theory and they provided more arguments in favor of it.

<sup>12</sup> Padgen, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> Qtd., Sigüenza y Góngora, Carlos de, *Piedad heroica de Don Fernando Cortés*, Mexico City, Jaime Delgado, 1992 in Pagden, Anthony, *op. cit.*, nota 7, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> Brading, David, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, Cambridge, Center for Latin American Studies, 1985, p. 12.

In his famous book *Theatro de virtudes políticas* Sigüenza y Góngora argues that Mexican history is part of the ancient world's history. In this work he argues that the dubious connection between the Old and the New World is an element of the wide coexisting endeavor to describe the origins of the Indian tribes (what is their origin? how did they get there and when?) in a way that would both establish them as the true sons of Adam and yield some casual explanation of their cultural behavior. His explanation for the origin of the "Mexicans" is based on an "attempt to establish a link between the Mexica, the ancient Greeks, and the sons of Noah by means of an interpretation of the name 'Neptune.'" <sup>16</sup> These myths presented the Spanish original conquerors as the natural rulers and the *criollo* descendants as the beneficiaries of the Mexican ancient history. Sigüenza y Góngora's does not want to see an independent Mexico, however he contributes to create in the *criollo* groups to promote the idea of 'national' political tradition that could be found not only in the heroic piety of the conquerors but in the civic accomplishments of the culture they had defeated.

Another historian who contributed with myths of origins was Francisco Clavijero. His *Storia antica del Messico*, which he wrote in his exile in Bologna, is the history of Mexico written by a Mexican. Such a contribution was pivotal in the discussion of the origins of Mexican Nationalism. He wrote the first cultural history of the New Spain and emphasized the importance of accepting their ancient heritage as the only means by which Mexicans could come to terms with themselves in order to face the great changes in store. His work was in some ways a continuation of the work done by Sigüenza y Góngora. Clavijero was one of the thinkers who animated the *criollos* in their cultural and political aspirations. He wanted to reestablish the connection between the Indian past and the realities of the Indian present. Clavijero was in favor of a single cultural identity for both *criollos* and Indians. He used the word *Mexicano* to describe the *criollo* and Mexican population. Clavijero's uses of adjectives of nationality were very successful in the development of a national culture of *criollos* and Indians. Both groups were different in many ways, however, the common land where they were born was the key element, which promoted this identity. This 'patria' was multiracial, and multifaceted, in order to be a Mexican it was necessary to have a share in both the white and the Indian worlds.

The combination of myths and political ideas were pivotal in the creation of a Mexican identity. The works of all the missionaries, conquerors, 'criollos,' and *mestizos* (in less degree) were gradually awakening a new consciousness in the people born in the New World. An aspect that reinforced

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<sup>16</sup> Sigüenza y Góngora, Carlos de, *Teatro de virtudes políticas que constituyen a un príncipe, advertidas en los monarcas antiguos del Mexicano Imperio*, in Francisco Pérez Salazar (editor), *Obras*, Mexico City, 1928, p. 23.



the *criollo* sense of belonging to a culture that was observant of the honor of its god was the religious one. And among all the different religious symbols and myths, the one which contributed the most in the creation of the Mexican identity and the one which replaced missionary exultance was the myth of Our Lady of Guadalupe.<sup>17</sup>

#### A QUINTESSENTIAL MEXICAN MYTH: OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

The Virgin of Guadalupe is a truly Mexican myth and probably the most influential myth in the creation of a Mexican identity.<sup>18</sup> The myth of St. Thomas-Quetzalcóatl enforced by Sigüenza y Góngora and others faced a stronger element of the patriotic zeal: the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The story of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe is:

On Saturday 9 December 1531, a poor Indian from Cuautitlán named Juan Diego heard sweet music as he was passing the hill of Tepeyac on his way to the Franciscan church of Tlatelolco. He then saw a young lady radiant with brilliant light who told him that she was the Virgin Mary, the mother of the one true God, and that she desired to have a chapel built in her honor at Tepeyac, so that she could show herself to be a merciful mother to Juan Diego and his people and to all the faithful who might seek her assistance. The Virgin commanded him to speak with the Bishop of Mexico and obtain his permission to build the chapel. But when the Indian went to see Fray de Zumárraga he was rebuffed. The next day he again saw the Virgin at Tepeyac and again he went to the bishop, who refused him permission. A third time the Virgin appeared and a third time the bishop rebuffed him, on this occasion demanding that some sign be offered that it was indeed the Virgin Mary and not some devil who had appeared. On the fourth day, by now discouraged, Juan Diego decided to go to Tlatelolco to find a priest to his uncle, Juan Bernardino, who was dying of the plague. But on his way the Virgin appeared to him and commanded him to climb the hill at Tepeyac so as to pick flowers. Despite the winter month, Juan Diego found the hill covered with roses and other flowers which he gathered into his cape, a simple mantle woven from cactus fibre. The Virgin told him to take the flowers to Zumárraga. Sure enough, when he opened his cape before the bishop, the flowers fell to the ground, only to reveal imprinted on the coarse ayatl cloth a likeness of the Virgin Mary. Awed by this miracle, the bishop fell to his knees in adoration and then had the image placed in the

<sup>17</sup> See Brading, David, 1984, *op. cit.*, nota 2, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> See Maza, Francisco de la, *El guadalupanismo mexicano*, Mexico, FCE, 1981; Osorio Romero, Ignacio, *El sueño criollo: José Antonio de Villerías y Roelas (1695-1728)*, Mexico, UNAM, 1991; Lafaye, Jacques, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican Consciousness 1531-1813*, The University of Chicago Press, 1987; Florescano, Enrique, *Mitos mexicanos*, México, D.F., Aguilar, 1995.



cathedral until it could be taken with all the ceremony to the chapel which was to be built at Tepeyac. Meanwhile, the Virgin had also appeared to Juan Bernardino, cured him of the plague, and told him that his image was to be known as Holy Mary Virgin of Guadalupe. Once the painting was installed at Tepeyac, it soon attracted the veneration of pilgrims and travelers and miraculous cures were performed, a sure sign of its heavenly origin.<sup>19</sup>

The publication of the *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe, milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de Mexico* in 1648 by Miguel Sánchez created a new era in the religious history of Mexico and Mexican history in general. The image in Juan Diego's *ayate* spawned a considerable devotion that was even stronger when a basilica in honor to Our Lady of Guadalupe was completed in 1622 by the Archbishop Juan de la Serna. However the image of Guadalupe was not exclusive of her basilica, it was rapidly reproduced and after few years there was not single church without an image of this Virgin.<sup>20</sup>

The work done by Miguel Sánchez inspired speeches, church sermons, books, etc. Luis Lasso de la Vega, chaplain of the Shrine of Guadalupe, was very excited and passionate with Sánchez publication that he stated: 'I and my predecessors have been sleeping Adams, possessing this second Eve in the paradise of the Mexican Guadalupe.' The following year he wrote *Huei tlamahuicoltica...Santa María Totlaconantzin Guadalupe*, a short account of the miraculous apparitions in Nahuatl. Among other publications that describe the fervor for the first Mexican national symbol we can mention Luis Becerra Tanco's *Felicidad de México*, published in 1666 and 1675 and *La Estrella del norte de México*. Becerra's work is an account of the apparitions in which he combined the Spanish and Nahuatl versions and tries to provide some historical support of the story.<sup>21</sup> Florencia's book is an ethnographic account which reports that every church and house in Mexico had an image of the Virgin. There are many other publications that provide us with a lot of information about the different shrines built in honor of Guadalupe, the sermons that priests gave in her honor, and the great devotion that all members of Mexican society showed to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In 1746 a great ceremony took place announcing that the Virgin of Guadalupe was the Universal patron of all the dioceses of New Spain. The Spanish crown and the Papacy confirmed years later such status. Pope Benedict XIV invoked the Virgin saying "non fecit talier omni nationi" (It was not done thus to all nations). This phrase was inscribed in most of the images of

<sup>19</sup> Qtd. Sánchez, 19-45 in Brading, David, *The First America. The Spanish monarchy, Creole Patriots, and The Liberal State 1492-1867*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 344-345.

<sup>20</sup> Brading, David, 1991, p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 346.

Guadalupe, according to Florencia's *La Estrella del norte*.<sup>22</sup> This phrase captured the unique patriotic features of the cult.

A virgin born in Mexico, a virgin that was considered by the inhabitants of New Spain as their own. She was the protector of all the people born in Mexico. The Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol that unified people from different races, social classes, gender, ages, political ideas, etc... The cult of the Virgin created a national and patriotic character. She was (and still is) the link between the *criollo* elite and the *mestizos* and Indians. The fact that she is the '*patrona de America*' was very important to create an identity as Americans breaking with the European shadows. As Brading points out, looking from an "historical perspective, the cult of Guadalupe image appears as a foundation myth...the cult of the Mexican Virgin is the only bond which unites [the Mexicans]".<sup>23</sup> In this respect, Félix Báez in an article titled "La Virgen de Guadalupe" mentions that '*la guadalupana*,' defined as mother of all the Mexicans, is the most evident national expression of one of the most extensive archetypes in the history of humankind. He argues that "la emergencia de la conciencia nacional en México está estrechamente vinculada con la enorme influencia de la religión en la sociedad novohispana... el mito guadalupano fue el referente primordial de su identidad social."<sup>24</sup>

On 12 December 1794 Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, a Dominica *criollo* priest, gave a speech at Tepeyac in the fiesta of Guadalupe. He addressed the greatness of Mexican's peculiar glory: "Is this not the chosen people, the privileged nation and the land of Mary, signalized in all the world by the glorious decoration of the special protection? New Spain, New Jerusalem praises the Lord, the new Zion praises its God in his Mother." He makes reference of Mary, the conqueror of America; Guadalupe was a new ark of the Covenant between Mary and the Americas. David Brading summarizes the conclusion of the speech:

First: the Guadalupe image was painted on the cape of St. Thomas, 'the Apostle of the Kingdom', Second: 'the Indians already Christians' had worshipped the image for the 1750 years at Tepeyac where the Apostle had built the Church. Third: when the Indians apostatized, the image was hidden; the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego in order to reveal its whereabouts. Fourth: The image itself was a first century canvas, a miraculous imprint of the actual face of Mary herself. He then proceeded to state that St. Thomas was Quetzalcóatl and to avow the Indians that knowledge of all the central dogmas of Christianity. He emphasized that even before the Conquest, the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>24</sup> Félix Báez, Jorge, "La Virgen de Guadalupe" en Enrique Florescano, *op. cit.*, nota 18, p. 140.

Indian worshipped Mary at Tepeyac as the Mother of God. He concluded with a petition to the Virgin whom he addresses as “teotenzán entirely virgin, trustworthy tonacayona,” to protect Mexico from the assault of the French. ‘Ark especially precious now that the Philistines of France have attacked Israel, do not permit that they should triumph as there they did owing to the sins of the sons of Heli’.<sup>25</sup>

The impact of this sermon was significant in all the groups, but particularly in the *criollo* group. It is not difficult to see that this sermon is one of the ideological bases that inspired the Independence movement. The War of Independence started in 1810, although, the idea of independence had started before as we have seen in this paper. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe that Hidalgo (one of the Mexican founding fathers) and the other founding fathers used was the main symbol of the movement. With this symbol they identified themselves as Mexicans against the group in power. The fact that Mier said ‘to protect Mexico from the assault of the French’ was because Spain had political problems with France. They did not want to be part of France, but also because there was a hidden message saying that they did not want to be part of France, Spain or any other nation, they were ready to become independent. The Mexican Independence movement was different from the contemporary revolutions of South America. The Mexican Independence movement had two priests as successive commanders-in-chief, Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos and many of the lieutenants were priests as well. This independence movement was the only one in which the main leader raised the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe to attract the different members of the society, and when he started the movement he cried: “Long Live Ferdinand VII! Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe! Death to the gachupines! Death to bad government! This movement had a particular religious flavor. When they entered the episcopal towns they were welcomed by religious processions and they always had high mass in the Cathedrals. In this respect, Simón Bolívar, the greatest figure in South American Independence movements said:

Happily, the leaders of the Independence movement in Mexico have profited from fanaticism with the greatest skill, proclaiming the famous Virgin of Guadalupe as queen of the patriots, invoking her name at all difficult moments and bearing her image on their flags. They truly believed that all this political vehement fervor was needed to be done in the name of the sacred cause of liberty.<sup>26</sup> The devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the mythical Indian past, and the sentiments against the conquest are the three

<sup>25</sup> Brading, David, *op. cit.*, nota 15, p. 28. See Servando Teresa de Mier, *Obras Completas*, Tomo I, pp. 225-55.

<sup>26</sup> Bolívar, Simón, *Obras Completas*, Venezuela, Sol, 1980, p. 74.

issues that promoted the development of the creole patriotism that created the Mexican nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

Rafael Moreno's essay "Creación de la nacionalidad Mexicana" discusses the ideas and the visions that the Mexicans that have been mentioned had of their culture, 'patria' (their fatherland), and of themselves. The ideas and contributions of Sigüenza y Góngora and Clavijero were very influential in the creation of a national identity. Moreover, there are two other contributions that represent the nationalistic movement of the eighteenth century and that display a nearly perfect consciousness of the Mexican and American reality of that time, which are Alzate and Bartolache's works. Moreno states that nowadays the existence of a growing Mexican life since the sixteenth century is unquestionable. He remarks that "los conquistadores conquistados por el medio, el hombre nuevo que formaron el español y el indígena, la nueva cultura, el orgullo cada vez mayor del criollo en su suelo, la reivindicación de la antigua cultura, la rivalidad y el odio entre criollos y gachupines, el debilitamiento de la autoridad virreinal."<sup>28</sup> These are the manifestations of a Mexican life which was becoming more conscious of its Mexican identity. Hence, it is easy to understand that the intellectuals from the second half of the eighteenth century find many elements of an emerging Mexican nationality: Sigüenza and Sor Juana nationalism, the evolution of a Mexican art, the end of the conquest, the enormous *guadalupanismo*, a better perception of the Mexican reality, the nationalistic optimism, the defense of America against Europe. These are the elements of the Mexican nationalism and identity.<sup>29</sup>

Mexicans have always been obstinate about the idea of protecting the memory of the most important events that have marked their society, and this has colored the method in which they picture their identity and destiny. From pre-Columbian times they have been engaged in a continuous battle to save their history from oblivion. Knowledge of the past was the foundation on which their priests and diviners based their astronomic calculations and their predictions of the future. Myths have been one of the ways in which they have safeguarded their past and one of the instruments that contributed the most in the creation of Mexican nationalism.

<sup>27</sup> Brading, David, *op. cit.*, nota 15; *op. cit.*, nota 19; Félix Báez, Jorge, *op. cit.*, nota 24, p. 140.

<sup>28</sup> Moreno, Rafael, "La creación de la nacionalidad mexicana" in Solange Alberro (editor), *Culturas, ideas y mentalidades*, México, El Colegio de México, 1992, p. 86.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.