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FERMENTING STRUGGLES

Pulque, Mezcal, and Tequila

In 2003, the National Institute of Anthropology and History, in collaboration with state officials and the National Chamber of the Tequila Industry (NCTI), began the lengthy process of seeking U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage recognition for the Amatítan-Tequila valley. Jalisco Secretary of Culture Sofía González Luna contributed the following statement to the official application:

> The cultural profundity of the agave landscape and the production of tequila harkens back to the very foundation of our nationality—for it fuses the closeness to nature and the land of the indigenous populations with the transforming and fundamental spirit of the Spanish settlers. From this union the spirit of a new culture was born, giving rise to the traditions and values that now characterize the Mexican people.[1]

Like many of the individuals that I met over the course of this project, González Luna described tequila's linkages to nature, heritage, and the idea of *lo mexicano*—an enduring national symbol that seamlessly (and romantically) reflects the nation's mestizo legacy.

Contrary to popular belief, tequila was not always a celebrated—let alone obvious—icon of Mexican identity. For most of the country's history, the agave-based drinks, pulque and mezcal, better reflected people's preferences. Pulque is a fermented, mildly alcoholic drink (between 3 and 4 percent) that was consumed by diverse ethnic groups for centuries before the arrival of the

Spanish. Despite its far-reaching popularity, pulque's close association with native identity and urban unrest made it made an unlikely contender to symbolize the modernizing nation. Mezcal is a distilled and high-proof spirit (between 35 and 55 percent) that—according to recent findings—might have been produced in limited quantities when the Spanish landed in New Spain.[2] As distillation technologies evolved,[3] mezcal became associated with qualities of progress that made it a more appealing alcohol alternative for the growing colonial population. Although mezcal's reputation increased steadily, it too would lack what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the "symbolic capital" necessary to represent the nation.[4] By the mid-nineteenth century, a certain type of mezcal from the Tequila region of western Mexico started to acquire distinction and would soon be known simply as "tequila." The tequila industry's ties to the city of Guadalajara and the state of Jalisco—and their status as possessing more European cultural attributes than indigenous ones—bolstered its standing as a product in its own right. However, its newly acquired prestige would also face challenges as nineteenth-century elites aligned themselves with European values, practices, and goods. Here, I explore how, by the beginning of the revolutionary period, tequila was in the best position to become Mexico's national spirit.

Agave in Mesoamerica

Pulque, mezcal, and tequila derive from the agave, also known as the maguey,[5] or the century plant.[6] Indigenous legends recorded by Mesoamerican and Spanish clergy relay stories about the origin of agave, pulque, and their interconnections. For example, the fifteenth century pre-Hispanic Nuttall codex described seventeen types of agave used by the Mixteca.[7] Spanish chronicler Fray Bernardino de Sahagún noted that the Olmeca credited male gods, including Tepuztecatl, Quatlapanqui, Tliloa, and Papaztactzocaca, with inventing pulque.[8] In his classic study of alcohol in ancient Mexico, Henry Bruman explained that the Huaxteca of northeast Mexico referred to the drink gods collectively as Ometochtli, or "Two Rabbit." In total, there were over 400 celestial deities linked to the agave-based brew.[9]

A mysterious and nurturing natural resource, agave sustained human life and its association with the moon complemented the sun's instinctual, rhythmic relationship with Earth.[10] Various indigenous groups adopted the virtues associated with the moon and applied them to their daily routines.

Attesting to these deeply held connections, the name *Mexico* comes from the Náhuatl words *metztli* (moon), *xictli* (navel), and *co* (place).[11] However, some have suggested stronger etymological ties, claiming that *Mexico* comes from the Náhuatl word *me xitl co*, whereby the root word *metl* relates directly to the maguey's (agave's) association with the moon.[12] Thus, depending on the source, Mexico means "place in the moon's navel" or "place in the maguey's navel."[13]

In precolonial civilizations, agave served a vital function in the organization of everyday life. Cultivated in many regions throughout Mexico, agave is described as the "universal understory upon which the later food resources were superimposed."[14] More than a source of sustenance, agave fibers were used for building homes, roofs, and walls; its leaves (or *pencas*) were used for making plates, paper, and rope.[15] Early Mesoamericans planted agave to delineate tracts of land and prevent alluvial erosion;[16] in treeless or deforested areas it served as the primary source of construction material.[17] As one scholar aptly put it, agave "thrive[d] and sustain[ed] human life."[18] Spanish colonizers were impressed by its numerous uses. The sixteenth-century writer José de Acosta went so far as to describe agave as "*el árbol de las maravillas*"—or "the tree of wonders."[19] Fray Francisco Jiménez explained that "with this plant alone, it seems enough to provide all things necessary to human life."[20] In his second letter to King Carlos V, explorer Hernán Cortés discussed both agave and pulque by explaining that the natives made "syrup from a plant which in the islands is called maguey [agave] . . . and from this plant they also make sugar and wine, which they likewise sell."[21] Despite their initial admiration, early impressions soon wore thin as the "*indios*" (the Spanish for "Indians") started to cause problems for the new arrivals.[22]

In pre-Hispanic times, pulque (*octli poliuhqui* in Nahuatl) was a sacred mixture in Aztec culture that only the elderly, nursing mothers, and the ruling class were allowed to drink during religious festivals.[23] Pulque provided vitamins and minerals (vitamin C, vitamin B, and carbohydrates); it was also used for medicinal purposes. More important, it served as a source of potable water in arid areas where water was scarce or contaminated.[24] Regardless of pulque's nutritive and healing qualities, there were limits on how much people could drink. Regulations dictated the size and number of cups allotted to different groups of people; for example, the elderly and nursing mothers had to use small cups, while children used even smaller ones.[25] The penalty for drunkenness involved public humiliations such as head shaving and beatings;

for repeat offenses of drunkenness, the punishment was death. Indigenous populations were cognizant of the potential danger that alcohol posed for their societies and incorporated a number of restrictive measures.[26]

With two ethnically distinct sectors of governance, the *república de los españoles* (Spanish nation) and the *república de los indios* (Indian nation),[27] the Spanish initially limited their interaction with indigenous communities and considered many of their habits and practices "nauseating, savage, and diabolic."[28] The consumption of pulque, with its bitter flavor, sour smell, and phlegmy texture, was among the local customs the Spanish found offensive.[29] Pulque's central role in religious ceremonies and public celebrations also concerned the Spanish. Imbibed to commemorate births, weddings, funerals, and warriors' rites of passage, it was common for drinking celebrations to last for several days.[30] Pulque was an important aspect of cultural life, not only because of its spiritual significance but because its consumption strengthened community bonds.[31]

Initial colonial accounts were riddled with "fantastic, hyperbolic, or fabulous tales that mythified the American countryside and nature."[32] The Spanish meticulously documented flora and fauna and compared new objects to those found in Europe. Detailed descriptions resulted in new taxonomies and systems of classifications.[33] Consequently, codices—the texts produced under the supervision Catholic clergymen (and often unacknowledged Nahua consultants)—legitimized the aspirations of colonial expansion at the same time that they narrated an epic tale of discovery. From the perspective of early Spanish settlers, who considered themselves *gente de razón* (people of reason), pulque's centrality in the lives of the indigenous, whom they considered *gente sin razón* (people without reason), was evidence of their inferiority and "the cause of virtually all sins and social problems."[34] For example, a report included in the *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las indias* (a set of governing laws and codes) stated that, when Indians drank pulque in moderation, their actions could be tolerated. However, when they mixed pulque with certain roots, the drink then "deprived them of their senses," "inflame[d] the body," and "sicken[ed], stupefie[d], and kill[ed] them with the greatest of facility."[35] More deplorable still, under the influence of this mixture they engaged in carnal acts, became violent, and committed idolatries.[36] Simply put, the Spanish viewed pulque as embodying the moral inferiority of the native population and encouraging civil disorder.

In spite of its nutritive qualities and its use in a range of drinking practices, pulque, according to this and numerous other historical references, reinforced ideas about Indian savagery and provided a context for the Spanish to justify their efforts at conquering the native population.[37] Although Spanish elites expressed concern over indigenous drinking, nonelite colonists distilled agave, producing their own versions of mezcal—or what was more popularly known as *vino de mezcal* (mezcal wine). European experimentation with alcohol was common practice throughout the colonial world, as water was laden with bacteria and often unsafe to drink.[38] Accustomed to consuming large amounts of wine, the Spanish brought grapes to Mexico but were initially unsuccessful at cultivating these crops.[39] Other circumstances, including "loneliness, unfamiliar surroundings, the threat of foreign invasions, epidemiological disasters" were among the many uncertainties that led early European colonists to drink.[40] That colonists drank frequently, and presumably also drank in excess, seemed to elicit little concern among officials who reported to the crown. For less affluent settlers, the high cost of imported alcoholic beverages likely encouraged experimentation with local raw materials such as sugar cane and coconut palm.[41] Even with the increased availability of domestic products, Spanish elites continued to hold onto their Old World drinking habits and exclusively drank imported wine and sherry.[42]

Documentation on the manufacture of mezcal during the colonial period details the taxes garnered and the names of those who applied for licenses. For instance, in 1608, the governor of Nueva Galicia (present-day Jalisco, Nayarit, and southern Sinaloa) imposed a tax on mezcal as a means of competitively protecting imported Spanish alcohol.[43] Beyond these records, very little is known about the production of mezcal and other distilled drinks during the first two centuries of colonial rule. What is known, however, is that by the early eighteenth century the commercial spirit industry began to emerge in Europe and in the Americas.[44] During this time, rum sales started to outpace beer and ale in the colony of New England.[45] In Mexico, improvements in distillation led to greater access to mezcal. These circumstances possibly contributed to the overall growth in mezcal production; however, unlike rum, mezcal did not surpass the popularity of pulque. Throughout the 1700s, the production of fermented and distilled agave products increased in scale and, for the latter, evolved into a commercial enterprise.

Adaptation, *Castas*, and Control

Spanish angst about alcohol consumption among indigenous and mestizo populations was tied to their concern about religious conversion, as a society that valued intoxication over abstinence was less likely to adopt the doctrines of Christianity. Missionaries aggressively set out to baptize natives, only to realize that they sometimes combined aspects of their former faiths with Christianity or reverted to their pagan practices.[46] The destruction of Mesoamerican temples and the initiation of baptism were not enough to fully or neatly indoctrinate the diverse ethnic communities into Christianity. As one Franciscan missionary explained, Yucatan Indians were "a simple people" who were "up to any mischief" because, in spite of the theological efforts of friars, they continued to partake in the rites and ceremonies that involved pulque.[47] Apprehension regarding religious conversion in relation to drinking habits during the colonial period was not limited to Mexico. Historian Frederick Smith reports that, in the Caribbean, indigenous populations (and later slave populations) were often described as more inclined to drunkenness, thievery, and idleness. Smith argues that these reports were likely embellished because missionaries needed to explain and justify their failure at converting the Carib to Christianity.[48] "Mischief" or not, native populations throughout the New World (to the dismay of the Spanish) negotiated the arrival of foreign religious doctrines into their cultural practices at their own pace. Not only did the Spanish miscalculate the ease with which religious adaptation would occur; they also underestimated pulque's spiritual, physiological, and ceremonial importance to native communities.[49]

Colonists' desire to convert the native populations was exceeded only by their aspiration to secure their social status. In Spain, the wealthy ate food that reflected their privileged position in society and distinguished them from those of different religious or ethnic backgrounds.[50] Food products that crossed the Atlantic to accommodate the colonizers' penchant for European ingredients included olive oil, capers, saffron, and fruits preserved in brandy.[51] Eating Spanish food rather than the local fare was not a simple indication of taste preference—social rank was intimately linked to what one consumed, especially in the anxiety-ridden colony. In ruling over a racially diverse populace, privileged Spaniards feared being perceived that they were "going native"—any hint of adopting indigenous customs could interpreted

as undermining the legitimacy of their status.[52] Increased cultural mixing threatened the regimented class and racial hierarchy. If elite colonists abandoned their Spanish heritage by consuming Indian beverages, it would be only a matter of time before strict class lines were challenged or, worse, eliminated.

Rigid class and racial boundaries loosened—but remained important—as creoles and Spanish lived and worked among diverse ethnic communities. The decreased ability to visually determine someone's class from his or her phenotype was especially troublesome. Intent on reinforcing their dominance, beginning in the eighteenth century, Spanish elites began commissioning a series of *casta* (literally, the Spanish for "caste") paintings that denoted an elaborate system of racial classification that emphasized Spanish superiority.[53] Originally, *castas* portrayed men and women of different races with one or two of their children. Also included were written descriptions that identified the race of their offspring. Portraying racial differences in a range of social circumstances and public spaces,[54] these taxonomies served as a cataloging system not just for subsets of people but for objects: flora, fauna, and food products.[55] *Casta* paintings were sent to Spain, where elites could whet their appetite for information about mysterious New World "others."[56] Like other exotic foodstuffs, such as corn and cacao, pulque was a common artistic subject through which racial hierarchies were solidified.

In 1822, one year after Mexican independence from Spain, *casta* designations were banned from official use in legal documents,[57] but nineteenth-century artwork continued to serve political functions, especially when it came to elevating the desired characteristics of the populace.[58] For example, José Obregón's 1869 painting, "The Discovery of Pulque," depicts a pre-Hispanic legend in which King Tecpancaltzin is presented with a bowl of newly discovered pulque by Xochítl, a young peasant woman (see Figure 2). Accompanied (presumably) by her parents and trailed by a woman carrying an agave plant (standing on the far left), the scene metaphorically illustrates the relationship among nature, culture, and order within European aesthetic conventions. The light-skinned features of Xochítl and Tecpancaltzin suggest an attempt to visually "civilize" the native populations. Xochíl's genteel pose, together with her indigenous offering to the king, implies her sexual availability and willingness to comply with dominant power arrangements that delineate the colonizer from the colonized.[59] When represented as functioning

FIGURE 2. *The Discovery of Pulque* by José Obregón, 1869.
Source: De Agostini/Getty Images. Reprinted with permission.

members of society, indigenous people were depicted as living in the political and social structures similar to those of European culture. Under these circumstances, "barbaric" Aztecs became orderly and noble subjects in the artist's "classical spectacle."[60]

Nineteenth-century paintings and early observations by Spanish writers reveal the intensity through which elites sought to assimilate indigenous populations within a familiar and hierarchal colonial framework. These examples call attention to the deep symbolism attributed to pulque as the epitome of indigeneity. Consequently, native people's consumption of pulque was seen not as a choice but as evidence of their inherently aberrant dispositions—traits that were used to justify Spanish superiority.[61] Although the Spanish made every effort to force diverse ethnic communities "neatly into a European world of laws and social relations," their attempts at full and swift indoctrination did not always work out as planned.[62]

Regulation, Women, and the Public Sphere

By the seventeenth century, pulque's strictly religious connotations had diminished. As it was no longer an exclusively indigenous product, the growing mestizo and mulatto population, in combination with nonelite Spanish colonists, imbibed the local brew and frequented *pulquerías* (pulque taverns). The commercial development of pulque ushered in new employment opportunities for women of different social backgrounds. A 1608 ordinance stipulated that no more than one law-abiding elderly Indian woman be licensed to sell pulque for every 100 customers.[63] Laws enacted in 1635 and 1639 specified that two women were permitted to sell pulque to the four Indian residential areas of Mexico City and one woman for towns within a five-league (approximately thirteen-mile) radius of the city.[64] In villages, peasant women were exclusively in charge of its distribution. If villages had few or no *pulquerías*, women sold pulque from the doorways of their homes.

Colonial elites continued to drink imported alcohol instead of pulque. However, selling the brew was another matter altogether. Illegal taverns, which comprised nearly half of all drinking establishments in Mexico City, were mostly run by married Spanish women known as *cuberas*. These *cuberas* purchased unsanctioned (that is, untaxed) pulque from customs officials or Indians who lived outside of the city and privately cultivated agave.[65] Indigenous and mestiza women skirted the authorities by buying sour pulque from legal *pulquerías*, adding it to *tepache* (a pineapple rind beverage), and reselling it as an alcoholic version of *tepache*. To the frustration of authorities, these clandestine operations not only evaded taxes but lowered the price of alcohol at illegal taverns, which reduced consumption at legal *pulquerías*.[66] Hence, the manufacture and sale of pulque enabled women of various backgrounds to tap into new economic and social possibilities; it also allowed women from the countryside to adapt to urban life and learn to navigate the challenges of colonial rule.[67]

Various legislative measures show that, to the likely disapproval of authorities, women frequented *pulquerías* as customers. Seen as centers of disorder and transgression, *pulquerías* attracted large crowds of "common" people, especially during religious festivals and holy days of obligation.[68] According to officials, excessive pulque consumption led to sexual indiscretions, including adultery and incest. To control such offences, the crown passed ordinances

requiring the mandatory segregation of women and men consumers in *pulquerías*.[69] However, in 1752, colonial administrators ended this regulation because it became increasingly difficult to separate husbands and wives, fathers and daughters, and brothers and sisters. Drinking pulque in clandestine places outside the view of authorities was a far greater danger than the threat of men and women socializing in a public space.

The mixing of opposite sexes in *pulquerías* was only one of many concerns that fueled the Spanish drive for full control of indigenous drinking habits during the early colonial period.

Clerics preached against the local practice of drinking to stimulate vomiting and enacted laws forbidding the sale of alcohol to native peoples.[70] Spanish chroniclers spent a substantial amount of time documenting local drinking practices. One reason for their preoccupation is related to how the Spanish and native populations viewed alcohol and defined moderation. The Spanish equated grape wine as a sacred symbol of Catholic heritage—it embodied the customs of a culture that they aimed to honor and represent in the New World.[71] For example, one friar described wine as "a drink venerated and honored by Christ; and as the most noble of drinks, He chose to transform it into His most precious blood."[72] The Spanish also followed the Mediterranean custom of drinking with meals and being able to "hold" their liquor. Within this context, maintaining one's sober demeanor was associated with religious piety and the virtues of restraint. Indigenous populations defined moderation according to the appropriateness of an occasion (for example, ceremonial practices or religious rituals) rather than the amount of alcohol consumed. Hispanic studies scholar Tim Mitchell suggests that, within Aztec society, drinking rituals were actually "proestablishment" and legitimated the elite's governing role.[73] That drinking quite possibly supported—and did not challenge—the status quo was lost on the Spanish.

Condemnation and concern about native drinking habits was evident throughout the colonial period. The Spanish passed numerous laws restricting the sale and consumption of pulque and even went so far as to institute corporal punishment for the crime of inebriation.[74] Authorities often attributed indigenous insurrections to pulque. Instead of admitting to not providing enough grain for sustenance, colonial officials blamed the "seditious effects" of pulque as the reason why diverse ethnic populations rioted in central Mexico City.[75] Some officials even went so far as to make distinctions among different types of pulque. For example, Spanish scientists maintained

that white, or pure, pulque was acceptable, but pulque mixed with roots was dangerous.[76] From this perspective, the mixing of ingredients, much like the mixing of different races, was seen as violating the crown's commitment to blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*)—a concept that ensured their authority over inferior racial groups (that is, *indios*, blacks, mestizos, and mulattos).[77]

The popularity of *pulquerías* continued to spread. In 1763 there were forty-five legal *pulquerías* in operation throughout Mexico City, most located on the outskirts where native peoples and poor mestizos resided.[78] Some establishments accommodated up to 600 people and included extensive seating areas that encouraged customers to assemble and relax.[79] *Pulquerías* were much more than places to consume alcohol; instead, they played an integral role in the lives of the lower classes and served as sites of leisure, where locals could meet, gossip, sing, and drink with family and friends. Inside, neighborhood and working networks were formed and enhanced; class and ethnic solidarities were reinforced.[80] *Pulquerías* functioned as a supportive and restorative institution in a society burdened by concerns over employment, food, housing, and contagion, all while being ruled by a repressive and proselytizing colonial government.[81]

Drawing a steady set of returning customers, *pulquerías* likewise attracted food vendors and musicians; inside the establishments activities included dancing, card playing, and gambling.[82] Spanish authorities considered *pulquerías* dangerous not only because they were centers of depravity, disorder, and crime but also because a large numbers of male and female *indios*, mestizos, and mulattos congregated there.[83] *Pulquerías* were thus deemed "dark, ambiguous spaces" where members of the opposite sex could cavort in public and people from different race and class backgrounds could convene to ruminate over the hardships of life under colonial rule or, worse, plan subversive action.[84] According to some reports, officials had every right to be concerned: One document noted that a group of mulattos were overheard making the toast, "To our health and that next year we will be governing the kingdom."[85]

Mexico City officials sought to limit sales of pulque to licensed taverns and tried to control drinking and social interaction within *pulquerías*.[86] However, even when city ordinances prohibited gambling, dancing, and the selling of food, little heed was paid to the rules. Barely half of all drinking establishments in Mexico City were sanctioned by authorities, yet compared to the taverns in the countryside, drinking in the capital city was fairly well structured in terms of providing a stable supply for a steady stream of customers.[87]

Pulquerías in Mexico City sold enough pulque to serve 62,000 customers daily.[88] Although there is some debate over the accuracy of these claims,[89] it is safe to assume that Mexico City was "a growing, impersonal, socially and economically heterogeneous urban center"—where old-fashioned rural norms guiding what, when, and how much people drank were loosened.[90]

More than a place of refuge from the confines of village life, Mexico City attracted traders and a growing class of urban laborers who worked in the surrounding mining areas.[91] While poor residents—*indios*, mestizos, and mulattos—frequented *pulquerías*, "persons of honor and decency" who enjoyed pulque were unable to patronize the locales without being vilified by fellow righteous citizens.[92] Yet population growth created demand for more drinking establishments. During the late eighteenth century, the number of *pulquerías* remained stable while the number of *vinaterías* (locales that sold distilled liquor) rose significantly.[93] Initially, *vinaterías* were considered reputable establishments where Spaniards and creoles (those of Spanish lineage who were born in New Spain) could avoid the "coarse riffraff" who frequented *pulquerías*.[94] After they were legalized in 1796, the number of *vinaterías* went from 194 in 1784 to 593 in 1800 and then to 784 in 1807, an increase of 304 percent.[95]

Efforts to curtail drinking among the growing urban lower classes did not stop Spanish and creole elites from eventually entering the pulque market. The commercial production of pulque became worthwhile to the Spanish only when consumers with disposable incomes could expect return on their investment in equipment, labor, and land.[96] Much like their takeover of other traditional indigenous foodstuff such as cacao, the early to middle colonial period was marked by the Spanish securing their economic stronghold in the New World. Spanish elites extended their power by gaining control of the means of production even when the consumption of particular products was considered deplorable.[97] Of the many new cultural relations, responses, and encounters taking place during this period, one association remained clear and constant: Drinking pulque was synonymous with "backward" populations.

The Rise of Guadalajara

Regardless of measures to outlaw or restrict alcohol use, by the end of the eighteenth century officials had no choice but to accept its place in society. The failure of alcohol reforms, in combination with a growing class of agave

and pulque *hacendados* (members of the landed class), prompted a shift in government strategy, one that moved from regulation to taxation. Agave cultivation and the alcohol trade were lucrative, especially for *hacendados* who had the resources to support every stage of the business, from growing agave to manufacturing spirits.[98] In 1811, Alexander von Humboldt observed that a proprietor who owned 30,000 to 40,000 agave plants was "sure to establish the fortune of his children," while nobles were making up to 46,000 pesos a year in profit from cultivation sales.[99] Increased yields resulted in considerable tax revenue for the crown.[100] What is more, the duty placed on pulque produced proceeds for war expenses, salaries for prison employees, and funds for street maintenance repairs.[101] Although these taxes primarily helped maintain colonial hegemony, they also funded more general infrastructural improvements. As the pulque market continued to develop in Mexico City and its surrounding areas, in the western part of the country the production of mezcal continued to evolve into a commercial enterprise.

Western Mexico in general, and the Guadalajara region in particular, emerged as an attractive urban alternative to Mexico City because of their diverse agriculture and large areas of undeveloped land. Guadalajara differed from Mexico City in the manner it was colonized and in the organization of its socioeconomic structure. Mexico City was a primarily indigenous urban center, while Guadalajara was historically associated with the provincial hacienda system.[102] Local indigenous populations swiftly succumbed to Nuño de Guzmán's violent two-year colonizing campaign (1530–1532) throughout Nueva Galicia (which included Jalisco). Historian Richard Lindley described his attack as particularly fierce: "His cruelty was so notorious that even his hardened military peers condemned the wholesale slaughter he perpetuated in the Northwest."[103] Guzmán's greed-driven pillage killed most of the local population while others fled, resulting in widespread loss of communal land rights. As a result, the remaining indigenous residents posed little challenge to the establishment of the colonial hacienda.[104] With its "vast tracts of abandoned, uncultivated land"[105] and semiarid climate, Guadalajara was characterized by new and more self-sufficient hacienda system (large agricultural estates) rather than the *encomienda* system (forced system of labor enslavement) under which Spaniards were granted control over indigenous towns and the right to require tribute.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, haciendas played a major role in rural social life, and often their populations surpassed those of

towns. Even though they were located outside of urban areas, haciendas were integrally connected to the city through the trade of agricultural commodities and cash crops, including agave and tobacco. Among these products was the distilled agave spirit, mezcal. According to historian José Maria Muriá, in the early part of the seventeenth century Pedro de Tagle, Marquis of Altamira and Knight of the Order of Calatrava, moved to the town of Tequila and established a mezcal wine factory. Described as the "father of tequila,"[106] de Tagle is often heralded as first person to introduce formal agave cultivation and mezcal production to the region.[107]

By the end of the eighteenth century, various incarnations of mezcal were produced for local use in areas across Mexico, from as far north as Sonora and as far south as Oaxaca, where there were plentiful supplies of agave. Sociologist Rogelio Luna observes that, during this same period, mezcal from the Tequila region experienced steady growth and started gaining a favorable reputation. In particular, he identifies three reasons that explain its expansion and increased popularity during this period. First, powerful hacienda owners and wealthy creoles were eager to invest in agave because of the low cost associated with its cultivation. Second, the undeveloped area near Tequila began to transform into a specialized region that offered an abundance of available resources and raw materials. Finally, the success of the booming mining industry in and around Guadalajara and the economic decline of cities like Puebla and Cholula brought new interest and capital to Guadalajara and the tequila-producing region.

Guadalajara's "provincial" yet "variegated, expansive, and prosperous" economic base distinguished it from other cities throughout the country.[108] Compared to its modest size in 1600, by 1800 the city had transformed into a "handsome urban center" complete with a university, new marketplaces, and the architecturally innovative Cabañas orphanage.[109] Income from the lucrative Bolaños silver mine, the region's grain and cattle markets, and its "role as western Mexico's premier administrative and ecclesiastical center" contributed significantly to Guadalajara's flourishing local economy;[110] it also became home to one of the New World's only *consulados*, or royal merchant guilds.[111] Venture-seeking elites' interests peaked as news of new investment possibilities made its way to Mexico City. The working classes were also attentive to the changes happening in Guadalajara, especially the need for skilled labor instigated by the city's prosperity. By 1822, one-third of the city's population was comprised of migrants from other regions.[112]

Despite the growing diverse populations moving into Guadalajara, the city was residentially differentiated by race. Class and occupation likewise played a part in the structure of separation. Although the Spanish, indigenous ethnic populations, creoles, mulattos, and mestizos intermingled in public spaces, in their private lives the native peoples retreated to their quarters in the suburbs, the artisans went to their boardinghouse lodging, and more affluent residents retired to their well-appointed abodes situated in close proximity to city plazas.[113] Topographically, along the northern and eastern areas of Guadalajara ran the San Juan de Dios River, which created a deep ravine in the city's geography. This ravine further contributed to the organization of housing across racial and class lines because "from the earliest times Indians and mestizos settled across the ravine to the east, thus forming an 'across the tracks' area."[114]

Northeast of Guadalajara, the Los Altos region (which includes the towns of Arandas and Lagos de Moreno) also played an important role in Jalisco's economic and political development. Los Altos was strategically located on one of two routes that the Spanish established to facilitate commercial and military transport. In the sixteenth century, this network of roads became even more significant when it was used to deliver newly discovered silver from Zacatecas to Mexico City. Once the network of roads in Los Altos became integrated into the circuits of colonial commerce, the Spanish began to settle the region's interior.[115] The racial makeup of the population, like that of neighboring Guadalajara, was greatly affected by colonial warfare. From 1540 to 1542 native tribes, including the Téules, Caxcanes, and Cuexes (collectively called Chichimecas), fought but were eventually defeated by the Spanish in the Mixtón War.[116] Under the command of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, Spanish forces carried out "exemplary punishment,"[117] killing or selling into slavery the conquered the indigenous ethnic combatants. The outcome of the war and the subsequent retribution that followed enabled "Spanish colonization in Los Altos *sans* miscegenation."[118] In the 1930s, historians and other intellectuals would begin to mythologize the racial purity and whiteness of Alteños (residents of Los Altos) in an attempt to create an ideal citizenry that would help modernize the nation after the revolution.

In contrast, Mexico City was necessarily more racially mixed. Before the arrival of the Spanish, it was the site of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan and had a population of several hundred thousand. During the early years of colonization, the Spanish relied heavily on the local labor force that lived in close proximity to the city. Therefore, the sheer size of Mexico City, in combination with

the colonizers' dependence on indigenous workers, impeded total division based on race.[119] When the Indian population decreased as a result of disease, Spanish officials in Mexico City were more resigned to the city's racial diversity as "the desired division of labor—Spanish merchants and property owners, Indian laborers, black slaves and domestic servants—rapidly eroded."[120] By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Guadalajara and its neighboring regions differed from Mexico City with regard to its wealth, industry, design, and structure of racial separation.

Differences in the history and organization of the two cities manifested symbolically in cultural associations. For example, unlike the pulque produced in and around Mexico City, mezcal from the Guadalajara area emerged amid a period marked by new capital investment, growth in local industry, and the increased importance of Guadalajara as a thriving metropolitan center. Whereas pulque symbolized the widespread complications and chaos associated with daily life in the colonial period,[121] mezcal signified the stability of hacienda life as it unfolded parallel to the growing prominence of the city. In other words, for elites, pulque signaled a failure on their part to control the native populations and manage urban expansion on their terms. Conversely, mezcal reflected their ability to contain the indigenous population (through their elimination, via the exploitation of their labor on ranches or by way of their isolation on haciendas) while enjoying urban conditions that were similar to European standards. Furthermore, the Spanish considered the consumption of more "modern" drinks (such as distilled spirits) as evidence of the superiority of "Western and bourgeois morality."[122] Thus, mezcal from the Tequila region not only represented a relatively successful balance of country and city life but materially embodied the characteristics of progress that allowed elites to preserve old social boundaries and construct new ones within the context of the evolving colonial economy.

The Development of the Mezcal Market

Mezcal production under the hacienda system thrived because of the availability of land and labor to grow and harvest agave. Even though haciendas were typically characterized by maize and animal production, shifting dietary demands of the growing urban consumer class prompted the cultivation and manufacture of higher-priced products such as wheat, sugar, and liquor.[123] In comparison to many agricultural crops, agave is durable and requires mini-

mal upkeep, despite its seven- to ten-year maturation period. Jalisco's semiarid climate and wide variety of indigenous agave (*agave silvestre*), in combination with the low cost of harvesting and distillation, provided incentive to produce mezcal.[124] Because agave was plentiful, easy to maintain, and profitable, small ranch owners were also able to participate in its cultivation. Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 spawned even greater industry growth as Spanish liquor imports were suspended.[125] The inaccessibility of Spanish goods provided new opportunities for the commercial expansion of the mezcal market.

Independence severely affected how Mexicans understood themselves collectively in light of their new identity as a country. In 1825, the first formal observance of Independence Day (September 16) took place in Mexico City. A number of symbolic gestures played a crucial part in the festivities, including, dances, processions, and speeches.[126] A new set of uniquely Mexican customs was beginning to emerge. Conservative Mexicans, however, spoke highly of the "civilizing" aspects of Spanish laws and culture, which they claimed help prepare Mexico for independence.[127] Elites continued to make judgments based on what people consumed. For example, in the decades following independence, upper-middle- and middle-class women in Mexico City were fascinated by European cuisine and prepared dishes such as veal blanquette and beef à la mode.[128]

Cookbooks of the period reflected the trend toward European recipes but often included alternative methods of preparation that aligned with Mexican culinary cultural styles and flavors. On one end of the spectrum, elites continued to pursue "the delicacies of continental cuisine,"[129] while, further down the scale, the middle classes were more open to experimenting with hybrid dishes. On the other end, the poor and working classes spent little time obsessing over European recipes and instead worried about how to feed their families. Those who could not afford to buy meat drank pulque for nourishment[130]—a practice that led the Mexico City council to raise taxes on alcohol and lower them on meat so as to encourage the poor to eat more and drink less.[131] Indeed, in the nascent stages of imagining a new national identity, what people consumed continued to index racial and class distinctions.

Growth in commerce also affected how people started to collectively understand themselves as Mexican. The closure of the port of Acapulco in the state of Guerrero led to an increase of commercial traffic in and out of the port of San Blas in Nayarit.[132] Travelers and merchants who passed though the western route from Guadalajara came in contact with mezcal and the

agave countryside. For foreigners seeking exotic and extraordinary situations, encountering fields of agave was a visually stunning and noteworthy experience.[133] For example, in 1850, American writer Bayard Taylor dramatically described approaching the town of Tequila:

> After riding two hours in the hot afternoon sun . . . a sudden turn disclosed to me a startling change of scenery. From the depth of the scorched hills, I came at once upon the edge of a bluff . . . Below and before me extended a plain of twenty miles in length, entirely covered with fields of the maguey [agave]. At my feet lay the city of Tequila . . .[134]

In 1830 there were nine documented distilleries operating in Tequila, some of which were owned by members of the Cuervo, Orendain, and Sauza families. In that same year, the taxes generated by production equaled 24 percent of the total rent collected by the state government.[135] Several decades later in 1897, there were forty-five haciendas in Jalisco producing mezcal.[136] The state of Jalisco and the city of Guadalajara benefited substantially from the revenues garnered from the tax on mezcal. By 1918, more than a thousand pesos a day were being collected, despite protest from manufacturers that the tax burden endangered the future of the industry.[137] The tax earnings are credited with the construction of the era's most elaborate buildings, including the Government Palace and the Bethlehem Hospital.[138] Subsequently, the production of mezcal from Tequila played a significant role in establishing Guadalajara's infrastructure and securing its place as one of the most vibrant cities in Mexico.

Mezcal production in the Tequila region emerged within an economic and politically distinct context from the mezcal production that was taking place in other parts of the county. The area's close proximity to and relationship with Guadalajara ensured a steady flow of interest and investment into Jalisco, especially in comparison to the primary mezcal-producing local of Oaxaca.[139] Labor arrangements, ethnic diversity, and land ownership were among the few characteristics that distinguished the two states. In marked contrast to the authority exercised by haciendas in states like Jalisco, native populations in Oaxaca were more self-sustaining and economically independent and held enough land "to escape the paternalism of hacienda life."[140] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the indigenous population (88 percent) managed most of the region's resources. Indigenous towns not only owned and maintained the majority of Oaxaca's acreage, but they often controlled and regu-

lated significant sectors of the internal market.[141] Communal land rights made them less susceptible to privatization and allowed them to retain a high level of autonomy. Because indigenous residents were seen as unlikely to embrace the idea of private property, Oaxaca was a less attractive alternative to investors, both local and foreign. The state's policy on communal land was interpreted by elites as antithetical to expansion and progress.[142] According to their perspective, the values of private property would "civilize" the *indios*, stimulate development, eliminate their crude customs, and "transform them into virtuous and hardworking citizens of the Mexican Republic."[143]

As the manufacture of mezcal in Jalisco started to modernize and become more efficient, the production of mezcal in Oaxaca remained characterized by dated procedures and equipment.[144] One historian observes that, during the mid-to-late 1890s,

> We see the introduction of technical advances in the state of Jalisco, and in particular . . . Tequila, namely the implementation of a modern system that made use of optimal, high-usage distillation equipment that crushed agave and extracted juice using mechanical machines and high power presses. Unlike this situation, in the state of Oaxaca, no new technologies were introduced, and as a result, they continued making mezcal using artisanal methods.[145]

Modernization, and the economic benefits that it prompted, varied substantively from one region to another. In a period when Mexican politicians, elites, and intellectuals sought out cultural examples and practices that not only embraced but illustrated the nation's commitment to modernity, mezcal from the state of Jalisco and *not* from Oaxaca better embodied the progressive attributes valued by those in power.

The reciprocal relationship between the region of Tequila (as a supplier of tax revenue) and the city of Guadalajara (with its thriving local economy and its flourishing reputation for industry) caught the attention of investors eager to capitalize on the area's profitable momentum. Within this context, mezcal from Tequila began to emerge as a product with its own unique status. Guadalajara's distinctive standing as a city separated along racial lines, one whose image was seen as more Spanish and creole than Indian or mestizo, also strengthened tequila's rising reputation, as elites and government officials continued to embrace the racial philosophies of the colonial period by favoring European products over indigenous ones. Despite these evolving distinctions, poor and working-class Indians and mestizos carried on with

their lives, preserving those daily practices and rituals that were important to them. Families kept on producing pulque and other mezcal drinks for their households or for the local market.[146]

At the same time that the production and consumption of mezcal began to increase, in Mexico City pulque drinking slowly began to decrease. Although pulque consumption initially rose significantly in the period following the conquest, average individual intake declined—or more likely leveled out—in the years leading up to Mexico's independence from Spain. Indigenous drinks were being displaced by other so-called modern drinks, including beer that was manufactured by European brewers in northern Mexico.[147] Another possible explanation for the decline is that daily alcohol consumption became a more marginalized practice in everyday city life. Contemporary ideas regarding the evils of alcohol once reserved for subordinate groups started to become applicable to the broader population in the nineteenth century as the medical establishment began to pathologize habitual drinking. Yet, pulque sales remained steady. For instance, after independence, the number of legal *pulquerías* increased, suggesting that many illegal shops became authorized during this period. Regardless, pulque's reputation as a commoner's drink would become even more tied to negative connotations as Mexican elites began, in a more persistent fashion than before, to force a European cultural framework on the entire nation.

Distinction and Discord

In 1862, prompted by President Benito Juárez's suspension of interest payments on foreign loans, French forces landed in Veracruz with the intention of conquering Mexico. While the United States was embroiled in civil war (1861–1865), France, with the support of local Mexican elites, appointed Emperor Maximilian I to Mexico. Although suffering an initial defeat in Puebla on May 5, 1862 (now celebrated as *Cinco de Mayo*), the French successfully established a limited monarchy. Once the American Civil War ended in 1865, the United States sent supplies to help the republican army and ordered the French to remove their forces from Mexico. By the end of 1867, the French withdrew their troops, the republic was restored, and President Juárez returned to power. Following this period of political crisis, commercial *hacendados*, agro-exporters, and manufacturers continued to hold the vast majority

of power in Mexico. Together, these industrial-focused groups sought to associate themselves with trade and foreign capital.

Infrastructural improvements such as the 1873 expansion of the Ferrocarril Mexicano (the Mexican railroad) provided greater access to different products—goods like pulque totaled 30 percent of all cargo on the new line that connected Mexico City to Veracruz.[148] Between 1880 and 1892, the continued construction of railroads, including the Ferrocarril Interoceánico and the Ferrocarril de Hidalgo y Nordeste, likewise made distribution more efficient. However, because pulque spoiled quickly, its transport was limited to distances within a few hours from where it was produced. Due to this material constraint, pulque could not withstand the journey to the United States, consequently preventing its entrance into the international export market. The development of the railroad system increased demand for distilled drinks, and hacienda owners happily acquiesced and planted more agave.[149] By 1898, a western railroad line ran through several villages, including Cocula (the birthplace of mariachi music)[150] and Tequila, with a direct line back to Guadalajara. Although much of the country enjoyed the economic benefits of transportation networks, the state of Oaxaca still relied on one stagecoach service route (from Oaxaca to Puebla), which itself was inaugurated only in 1875 and took three days to complete.[151]

Railroads facilitated the distribution of *mezcal de Tequila* (mezcal from Tequila), but they also helped transport European spirits such as cognac and whisky, which enjoyed a steady increase in popularity during this period.[152] Mexican elites were especially fond of European alcoholic beverages.[153] Historian José Maria Muriá explains that upper-class Mexicans had a penchant for all things French. Francophilia among the wealthy was so rampant that they were called *los afrancesados*, or "the Frenchified," because of their espousal of French customs.[154] Even though less than three decades had passed since the French invasion, widespread anti-French sentiment did *not* develop. For example, the overthrown Emperor Maximilian was not considered a villain but instead was seen as a "misguided hero."[155]

Although members of the upper class were among the few who enjoyed the privilege of consuming French products, the admiration of French cultural ethics was more broadly rooted in the desire to leave behind the antiquated lifestyle associated with the colonial period.[156] Noted Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos writes that Mexicans wanted "to make a *tabula rasa* of the

past and begin a new life . . . The most intelligent and active group in Mexican society proposed to use French ideology as a weapon for the destruction of old institutions."[157] The revolutionary spirit of France offered the educated classes the basic principles for combating the political oppression that took place under Spanish rule. For Mexican elites, the consumption of French products, including cognac and champagne, symbolized devotion to the principles of progress and order. In contrast, pulque, mezcal, and mezcal from Tequila were domestic drinks (that is, less distinctive and less expensive), and consuming them was evidence of one's limited purchasing power and social class. It is important to note that social class in Mexico represented more than just material wealth and cultural capital; it carried racialized connotations that stifled residential mobility and limited economic opportunities.[158] The racialized social order closely mirrored that of the colonial period: At the top were individuals of European descent, then mestizos, and finally, at the very bottom, were mulattos, blacks, and indigenous groups. Even though it was acquiring a reputation for being a modern and uniquely Mexican spirit, mezcal from Tequila still communicated one's class and racial identity and conveyed one's social values (for example, less committed to economic improvement).

Despite the conspicuous consumption promoted by Mexican elites, the production of mezcal from Tequila continued to increase. For instance, in 1900 there were sixty distilleries; in 1910 there were eighty-seven.[159] By the late nineteenth century, mezcal from Tequila's status within Mexico (as a drink special to the state of Jalisco) was becoming solidified. Although it is difficult to determine exactly when "mezcal from" (*mezcal de*) was dropped from its name, it is likely that sometime during the early part of the twentieth century it was known as "tequila" in the domestic market. Another possibility is that, when distribution increased in the United States, importers and marketers shortened its name to make pronunciation easier.

Mezcal from Tequila's reputation was also evolving within Mexican and Latin American communities in the United States, yet with implications that went beyond its regional association. For example, advertisements in the Los Angeles, California, Spanish-language newspaper, *Dos Repúblicas*, described shops' assortment of imported wines, liquors, and "the famous mezcal from Tequila."[160] In 1915, one Kansas City, Missouri, business—in addition to listing its large selection of alcohol—informed readers that "because of the closing of distilleries in Mexico, we have the only stocks of Mexican liquor

because we bought up a large amount before the revolution." The two beverages advertised under this headline were mezcal and mezcal from Tequila.[161]

In contrast to their domestic (and hence, commonplace) reputation in Mexico, in the United States mezcal and tequila were advertised as "famous," suggesting that they were valued in ethnic Mexican markets. Far from exhibiting the consumer's antipathy toward economic improvement, purchasing tequila or mezcal while living in the United States served as a means of preserving and honoring cultural identity. In addition to providing news and facilitating immigrants' adjustment to a new society, early-twentieth-century Spanish-language newspapers promoted nationalism and nostalgia for their readers' country of origin.[162] Read primarily by members of the middle class, these newspapers, and the advertisements for tequila within them, enabled financially resourceful Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other Spanish-speaking populations to learn *how* certain products illustrated affection for Mexico.

Newspapers were not the only sites where Mexican immigrants (and other Spanish-speaking individuals) living in the United States became acquainted with tequila during this time period—efforts were also made by the Mexican government. In particular, tequila was one of several products touted internationally as symbolizing the country's technical savvy and commercial potential. The promotion of Mexican products reached new heights during the reign of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910). With the goal of attracting foreign investment, Díaz took special interest in developing the perception that Mexico was a modern, rational, and stable economic environment. Operating under the auspices that progress could be achieved by the creation of foreign markets for Mexican goods, the Díaz government participated in numerous international expositions and world's fairs. Officials wanted to sharpen Mexico's global image and, at the same time, incite productivity on the local level. Bureaucrats anticipated that participation in these shows would "awake a latent industriousness in the Mexican people."[163] As Mexican products received medals and gained international exposure, it was thought that the Mexican people would "raise their standards of craftsmanship and productivity."[164]

Branding Mexico internationally trumped domestic elites' actual drinking preferences. Regardless, new tequila-manufacturing elite families were emerging and beginning to wield their own influence in light of prevailing beliefs of the superiority of European products.[165] Making appearances at

expositions in places such as Madrid, Paris, and San Antonio, Texas, mezcal from Tequila was one of a number of goods endorsed by the Mexican government. In the international market, it was referred to as mezcal from Tequila; however, the Sauza company took a different route and called their products "Mexican Whiskey" or "Tequila Brandy." Although there is no official explanation about why Sauza used these names, it is possible that associating their product with other well-known European and American drinks (whiskey and brandy) helped them appear less mysterious to new markets. Such a tactic follows the assumption and politics put forth by the Díaz administration—that Mexico could succeed if it adhered to European and American cultural principles and ways of doing business.

Breakthroughs in glass technology, especially the invention of bottling automation, enabled alcohol entrepreneurs to cut costs and increase output.[166] The new mechanized packaging added to tequila's modern cachet. The ability to purchase, hold, and pour machine-manufactured bottles not only represented a cutting-edge process, one that consumers could experience for themselves, but from a commercial perspective it also created new opportunities for companies to visually reinforce their commitment to industrialization. For example, the label for Floras Tequila (a Jose Cuervo product) brandishes an image of the impressive machinery used in its factory (see Figure 3). The massive copper pot stills indicate that the company is distilling large amounts of tequila and is doing so efficiently and innovatively, giving the impression that this is no ordinary manufacturing plant. The factory floor is clean and orderly; technology has replaced the need for employees and the risk of human error. Flanking both sides of the machine are the numerous gold medal awards that the company has received at international expositions in recognition of its supreme taste and quality. To be sure, the label exuberates brand pride and commercial confidence.

Porfirio Díaz's effort to revamp Mexico and its international image came at the expense of political reform and social welfare.[167] Embracing an ideology that shunned the masses and looked to Europe as a model of modernity, Porfirian attempts to stylize Mexican cultural values and tastes within a European framework gained little support outside elite circles. However, the *Porfiriatos*' backing of the tequila industry suggests that the schism created in the pursuit of modernity was not always a predictable, all-or-nothing enterprise. In the years previous to the revolution, tequila was promoted sometimes as a product that was similar to American and European distilled drinks (whiskey

FIGURE 3. Tequila label illustrating the modern production process.
Source: Enrique F. Martínez Límon (1999), *Tequila: The Spirit of Mexico*. Bath, England: Absolute Press.

and brandy) and other times as a product that reflected a unique blend of Mexican tradition and ingenuity. Regardless of Díaz's alleged preference for cognac over tequila,[168] in his regime's pursuit of modernity, tequila was one of the few goods that withstood the dense and often problematic relations associated with advancing an authentically Mexican style of enlightenment.

Conclusion

By the beginning of the twentieth century, tequila was steadily becoming associated with Mexican identity inside and outside of the nation. Although pulque was the earliest agave-based alcoholic beverage, and, by all standards, distinctively indigenous, by the early twentieth century its reputation was exactly that: too *indio*. Indicative of the chaos and difficulties of the early colonial period, for the Spanish, pulque represented their failure to gain full control over the indigenous population. As the number of pulque consumers grew, its negative connotations diminished but never fully disappeared.

Indigenous ethnic populations and mestizos, who comprised most of the urban poor, continued to favor pulque over other fermented drinks, such as beer. Up until the revolution, pulque was the most widely consumed alcoholic drink in the country. Yet, its deep-seated ties to an antiquated version of Mexico—one that was imprinted with racial and class markings—in combination with its perishability, could not endure the drive for modernity.

The production of mezcal outside of the Tequila region continued to spread during this period. However, despite its growth, mezcal manufacturers—in regions such as Oaxaca—encountered barriers that included an insufficient transportation infrastructure, which limited its distribution. Further, because it lacked strong ties to a thriving metropolitan city center such as Guadalajara, the region was unable to establish and, hence, capitalize from a confident commercial climate. Compared to the pulque of Mexico City and the mezcal produced in family-run operations, the mezcal of Tequila, Jalisco, was the least linked to indigenous culture, the lower classes, and the backwardness associated with local and small-scale production (for example, manufacturing and distribution). The rise of Guadalajara as a colonial success story, one in which Spanish elites established a thriving economic base, also contributed to tequila's rising reputation. Therefore, in the period preceding the Mexican Revolution, tequila had already acquired the momentum needed to emerge as a symbol of the nation's renewed identity—a sentiment that would take on new meaning throughout the twentieth century. As I discuss in the next chapter, enlightened narratives of Mexican nationalism, although on the surface appearing to embrace cultural diversity, remained closely linked to the principles of progress, ideals that were incompatible with indigenous values. Tequila best embodied the virtues of growth, efficiency, and unity. This association became more pronounced during the postrevolutionary period, when tequila's status would become indelibly associated with Mexico's own unique identity as a modern nation-state.