

THE MEXICAN HAUTE-BOURGEOISIE: AN OUTLINE
OF ITS STRUCTURE, IDEOLOGY AND EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

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Introduction: the structural configuration of the aristocracy

The purpose of this article is to present some results on a long-term research project concerned with the structural configuration of the Mexican aristocracy (1).

Historically, the Mexican aristocracy today is constituted by those families which can trace descent to ancestors who achieved membership into the ruling class of three specific and fairly well delineated historical periods: (1) the original conquistadors and *encomenderos* of the XVI century and well into the middle of the XVII century; (2) the *hacendado*, mining, and trading plutocracy that dominated New Spain from the first decades of the XVIII to the end of Colonial times; (3) the continuation of this plutocracy from Independence to the end of the Diaz regime. There is a remarkable continuity of social prestige and economic and political power from the XVI century to the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and it would be difficult for any member of the aristocracy to fake a lineage or exaggerate the deeds of important ancestors. Since the middle of the XVIII century, the political participation, economic achievements, intellectual production, and social pre-eminence of distinguished members of the aristocracy is well known, written in the history books and in personal memoirs. Less illustrious members of the group generally do not dare to make dubious claims. There is one rather common claim, however, that many aristocratic families make and cannot prove. It must be regarded as part of the legendary components that always accompany any system of ancient

lineage or genealogy: descent from original conquistadors. Perhaps 10% of the aristocratic families today are able to substantiate this claim, whereas the majority can substantiate descent to the XVIII century. It is clear, however, that the minimum genealogical requirement for bonafide qualification as a member of the aristocracy is descent from an ancestor who had achieved aristocratic status no later than 80 years ago, that is, during the Diaz regime. Probably no less than 25% of all families today are in this category. We do not know, however, whether antiquity of lineage is the most important attribute in the relative standing of the different sectors of the aristocracy today. On the basis of what we know now, our working hypothesis is that wealth is just as important as antiquity of lineage in relative aristocratic pre-eminence.

Thus, at the top there will be those who are not only universally recognized as descendants of conquistadors but are wealthy as well, while the wealthiest will rank higher than those who can boast of nothing but a proven ancient lineage.

Disregarding ranking and social prestige among the aristocratic group, we shall concentrate on what its members share in common, how they express it, and how are they related to the other two sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*. But first, how do they extend recognition to one another, and what are the ostensibly validating symbols of their class? The single, most visible means of recognition is the family name. This is something contextual, of course, in that most aristocratic patronymics are shared by thousands of people from all social classes. (It is well known that *repartimiento* Indians very often took the name of the *encomendero*, as later on they took the name of the *hacendado*). What we mean here is that the average aristocrat knows perhaps half of the patronymics of families to whom he extends social recognition, and in the case of knowledgeable members of the group, they may know most of the patronymics.

In 100 questionnaires administered to a stratified sample of males and females ranging in age from 35 to 75, there was a core of 35 patronymics that were given by all respondents from a mean average of 65. In ten cases respondents knew more than 100 patronymics, and in two cases more than 125. On the basis of these figures, we estimate that the total number of patronymics is slightly over 200. Moreover, the preliminary analysis of these data tells us that of the 35 patronymics listed by all respondents, seven claim descent from (1), 23 from (2), and five from (3). To be sure, the patronymics that an individual bears must be accompanied with other symbols of social recognition in order to acquire significance as an indicator of class membership.

In some ways this is an academic consideration, since probably

more than half of the members of the aristocracy know each other personally or know about each other indirectly. To this extent, the group is integrated, and the networks of social and economic ties of the average aristocrat are extensive. Although a fairly high percentage of aristocrats may not know each other or about each other, they share such a high common cultural denominator and expressive patterns of behavior so as to present no problems of self-identification. There are subtle cues of speech, patterns of expression, dress, color combination, eating manners, and demeanor, which will leave little doubt concerning self-identification when two members of the aristocracy meet for the first time. (Unlike the upper reaches of stratification in the United States, occupation, place of residence, membership in clubs, elite consumer patterns, and similar objective or subjective indicators are not as significant in the classification of individuals in the Mexican aristocracy). If there are still doubts, and the interacting parties want to make sure of their status, the conversation may quickly drift to people they know, genealogy, name and place of the ancestral *hacienda*, mentioning of an important ancestor, and generally some allusion to the past that unmistakably associates them with the aristocracy.

Collectively and individually, the aristocracy has a clear view of itself and a high degree of collective consciousness. Indeed, it is surprising how the group has managed to maintain such an ideology in view of their loss of political and economic power. Endogamy, of course, has been a significant factor in maintaining the boundaries and integrity of the group, and the old and middle aged are very much aware of it. Aristocrats know that the incidence of exogamy since the Second World War has so far been tolerable, but when it becomes fairly generalized - as is beginning to happen - it will be the end of the group as it has existed and adapted to the new social reality of Mexico since the Revolution. Probably more than any other factor, what has sustained their strong sense of identity is a deeply ingrained belief that, regardless of wealth and political power, for better or for worse their ancestors were the architects and rulers of Mexico for nearly 400 years.

The Mexican aristocracy today is in many ways an anachronism and a testimony to the persistence of social institutions, when systems are left free of the application of brute force in radically altering the social structure. This is most telling in the social recognition of the aristocracy by the different classes of Mexican society. A social class is not only a self-defined entity, but in order to be a viable group and a significant category, it must be recognized by other social classes. By this statistical standard, the aristocracy exists only minimally, for it is doubtful that more than one percent of the total population of

Mexico is aware of it, much less recognizes the highest status that its members attribute to themselves. The lower classes in Mexico discriminate only between political power and wealth, and accord status strictly in terms of these two alternatives. The lower-middle and middle-middle classes are aware and recognize what we have defined as the plutocracy, but they do not discriminate the aristocracy among its sectors. They recognize degrees of status but strictly based on political power and wealth, and of the two, wealth is undoubtedly the more important. The upper-middle class, composed of the highest professionals and probably the best educated sector of the population, are aware of the aristocracy but do not accord to its members any higher status than that accorded to the plutocracy as whole. Since members of the upper-middle class are well aware of their own position and can discriminate between social status and political power and wealth, they are quite often conscious of the subtle and not so subtle differences between the aristocrats and the other sectors of the plutocracy. In fact, the upper-middle class often refers to the aristocracy as *la sociedad* 'the society', or by the term itself. (We are assuming that Mexican social stratification is not that different from what has been described by American sociologists for the United States. This is especially the case for Mexico City, which concerns us here almost exclusively). Finally, it is the plutocracy itself that is most aware of the aristocracy and accords it the highest degree of social recognition. The non-aristocratic sectors of the plutocracy or *haute bourgeoisie* value and seek social status, and it is in this context of political power and wealth that the old mechanisms of social ambition and economic necessity are homogenizing the new ruling class of Mexico: some rich aristocrats are already plutocrats, but the majority are seeking an economic base that they cannot entirely achieve without allying themselves to the plutocrats as a group; whereas the plutocrats are becoming slowly, but surely, like the aristocrats in manners and values.

As isolated pockets in provincial cities, the aristocratic class would have disappeared quickly after the thirties. It is the concentration in Mexico City that saved its members from this fate. The capital, of course, had always been the residence of a large proportion of Porfirian aristocrats, and even if they did not live there permanently, many aristocratic families kept residences that they inhabited for part of the year. For the past three decades, probably 90% of the aristocracy has resided in Mexico City. The other center that contains a significant nucleus of the group is Guadalajara, which attracted a large proportion of the northern *hacendados*. In probably six or seven other traditional cities associated with the *hacendado* class there are today mem-

bers of the aristocracy. Since its foundation in 1531, for example, the city of Puebla was an *encomendero* and then an *hacendado* center *par excellence*. By the beginning of the XVII century it rivaled Mexico City in importance as an agricultural and manufacturing center, and it had become the second largest city in the New World. By 1950, not a single aristocratic family - some of them tracing descent to original conquistadors and the earliest *encomenderos* in the Valley of Puebla - remained, as they had all migrated to Mexico City (2).

Residence *per se* has never been a significant indicator of class membership in Mexico. Even in colonial times, there was no particular sector of Mexico City where the aristocrats, the rich, and the powerful concentrated. A survey of the palaces and mansions in the colonial section of Mexico City shows that there is no discernible pattern of residential exclusiveness. During the Diaz regime, there were some exclusive residential areas, as the city expanded toward the west, but again this was not connected in any significant way with the ruling class. Today, the situation is the same, and aristocrats reside in many sections (*colonias*) of the city.

Throughout the Diaz regime, most aristocrats lived in the center of the city, where today many of their former palaces and mansions are still a testimony to the great power and wealth of a bygone era. These structures run the gamut from the late XVI century to the last days of the Diaz regime. The most elegant and architecturally distinguished structures were built roughly between 1730 and 1790, which coincides with the great mining boom that resulted in the first truly great fortunes in Mexico. Although the Mexican Revolution did not affect urban property, loss of land forced many aristocrats to sell their palatial residences, as they could no longer afford the numerous servants that were needed for their upkeep. Some of the most distinguished palaces, however, were expropriated by the city for museums and other public uses. All the colonial residences of the aristocracy are now in the public or business domains, but many of the mansions built during the Diaz regime are still occasionally inhabited by their original owners.

Many families had country places within five to ten miles from the civic center, which after sixty years of continuous expansion have been totally engulfed by the city. Here again, only the richest of the aristocrats have been able to afford the upkeep of these villas. The structure, grounds, size and elaboration of the average aristocratic house today is not different from the average upper-middle class or plutocratic house.

The most diagnostic trait of the aristocracy today, what clearly

distinguishes it from other sectors of Mexican society with whom it shares the same economic position, is the arrangement, decoration, and furnishing of the household. Furthermore, it is in the privacy of the household that the dying aristocracy displays best those patterns of behavior that are so dear to them, and which have always been its hallmark. It is also within the context of the household that we find the most characteristically validating symbols of their former status and power. The antique and colonial furniture, porcelain, silver, leather-bound books, art, and above all, the pictures of distinguished and not so distinguished ancestors, are a constant reminder of what they once were. The characteristic combination of colors here, the subtle arrangement of pictures there, the taste in the combination of lights are, to be sure, subjective and perhaps elusive and conceptually difficult for the social scientist to handle, but they represent many generations of expressive cultural development. By contrast, the households of the upper-middle class and the plutocracy may have very expensive art, furniture, and decorations, but these almost invariably attest to their social origins, usually tempered by the hand of the professional interior decorator. The taste, the symmetry, that ethereal sense of permanency is not there, and in our view, these are the surest indicators of recent social mobility and the turmoil that Mexican society has experienced for the past 70 years.

Lest we be charged with elitism and intellectual snobbery we want to assure the reader that the same expressive components can be observed at the bottom of the Mexican stratification system. No anthropologist who has worked in traditional Indian communities can fail to notice the civility of native behavior, the integrity of dress, the symmetry and aesthetic quality of the household, and in general, the sense of solidity and of everything being properly structured that has been the result of 450 years of acculturation between pre-Hispanic and European culture. What a dramatic contrast when one observes the individual or collective passage from Indian to rural or urban proletarian status. The aesthetic, moral, and structural values disappear and an ambiance of disorganization sets in: the subculture is in *nepantla* (in Nahuatl, literally, 'in the middle' - as some noble Indian philosopher described transitional Indian culture in the late XVI century), for these transitional people are neither Indian nor yet the proletariat that they aspire to be. The awkwardness of behavior, the insecurity of demeanor, and the synthetic, even plastic, quality of dress and abode is to the observer alternately touching and heartbreaking. We are acquainted with the process of social mobility at the bottom and the top of the stratification system of Mexico, and what we have said here is

probably not significantly different as individuals and segments of Mexican society move through the steps from lower class to upper-middle class status. It is painful to observe the process of social mobility, and the economic and psychological struggle that the process involves (3). Thus, social mobility and changes in status not only involve the acquisition of wealth and/or political power but a significant expressive component. To deny this expressive component explicitly, as in the case of the Marxists, or to minimize it implicitly, as in the case of American sociologists, has been a significant drawback in stratification studies.

The expressive wealth of aristocratic households varies significantly but even those of the younger generation - that is, couples between the ages 25 and 30 - contain enough family heirlooms of a variety of sorts as validating symbols of their status. Indeed, the parents of both bride and groom make sure that they inherit heirlooms upon marriage, and try to instill in the couple a continuation of the traditions of the ancestral household. To maintain such position, however, is becoming increasingly difficult, for the younger generation is already quite significantly a part of the social set of the undifferentiated *haute bourgeoisie*.

By American standards of wealth, probably 10% of the aristocratic families are millionaires, that is, have incomes of more than 100,000 dollars per year. No aristocrat can be counted among the largest fortunes in Mexico, but perhaps a dozen or so surpass fortunes of 20 million dollars. The impoverished families constitute about 15% of the group, that is, with a yearly income of less than 30,000 dollars. About three-fourths of the aristocratic families may be classified among the well-off economically, that is, with incomes between 40,000 dollars and 75,000. Thus, the aristocracy is a rather homogeneous group from an economic standpoint. The range of economic activities extends from banking and industry to the liberal professions and medium-size business to middle-range bureaucrats in the public and private sector. Within the group, wealth *per se* does not necessarily confer status, and as the aristocracy diminishes in social importance by its absorption into the *haute bourgeoisie*, antiquity of lineage seems to loom larger, a rather hopeless reaction, as the integrity of the group inexorably begins to expire. The majority of the well-off aristocratic segment remains the most conservative and withdrawn, whereas the upper and lower segments of the economic spectrum are the most liberal and amenable to interaction with the *haute bourgeoisie* at large. The former, having little economic interaction with the plutocracy, more or less openly encourage isolation and minimize social contacts, where as the

latter, being either plutocrats themselves or work in plutocratic circles, are much more amenable to exogenous social interaction. Predictably, it is the younger generation that has forced upon the middle aged and old a number of patterns of exogenous social interaction with the rich and powerful. Impressed with the plutocracy's sometimes extravagant patterns of consumption and entertainment, the younger generation has been drawn easily into plutocratic circles, thereby weakening the strong sense of exclusivity of the older generations.

With independence from Spain the nobility was abolished, and it became illegal to refer to individuals by their titles. During the brief period of the French Intervention, the nobility was reinstated and a number of new titles were issued. With the reinstitution of the republic in 1866, the nobility was definitely abolished, but it appears that people may have continued to use titles in public. Two years before the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Independence, for example, three large volumes on the oldest and most aristocratic Mexican families, including their genealogies and titles, were published with government approval (Ortega 1908). Since then, titles of nobility and those who hold them have been largely forgotten by the majority of aristocrats, but they have lingered on in the consciousness of the group. Of the 79 titles granted by the Spanish crown in colonial times, probably half are remembered by the older generation today. There are also perhaps a dozen titles that are well known to most aristocrats, and they represent the most illustrious families. This does not mean that members of these families, or of other families reputed to have held titles, hold the titles now, for many of them have not been reactivated for lack of interest and others have passed into the hands of families in Spain. This raises the question of how important titles of nobility were throughout colonial and republican times, and how important knowledge of them and of those who possessed them is today. This is a difficult question to answer, but we suspect that the Mexican aristocracy as a whole relishes the knowledge that in the past there were so many nobles in their midst, and as such, the collective knowledge of nobility is another validating symbol of their status (4).

In part, this is corroborated by the fact that the Mexican aristocracy is well related to the Spanish nobility and that of other European countries, especially Italy and France. Not only do social relations span the Atlantic, but there are a number of European nobles residing in Mexico, some of them of the highest rank. Inter-marriage has often taken place between Mexican and European aristocrats, and there are extensive social and family networks involving a wide range of behavior. Unlike the marriage alliances that took place between European

nobles and American plutocrats from the middle of the XIX century up to the Second World War, the alliances between the former and Mexican aristocrats have always been between social equals and generally do not involve economic considerations *per se*. The social and marriage relationship binding Mexican aristocrats to the European nobility are of very long standing and they have been renewed periodically through the centuries. Social ties to the European nobility, and the affinities that they have in common, is another important validating symbol of Mexican aristocrats as the undisputed leaders of appropriate behavior and manners.

Expressive behavior and the new plutocracy

Structurally, a good case can be made for including the Mexican aristocracy in an undifferentiated *haute bourgeoisie* that we have called the new plutocracy. This is not at all the case behaviorally, and from this viewpoint, the aristocracy has its own subculture distinct from a number of classes or subclasses in the upper reaches of Mexican stratification. We will not bother with the common cultural denominator shared by the members of the upper-middle class and the economic and political sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*, but it is important to have a glimpse of that complex of expressive behavior that is almost exclusively aristocratic, for it has significant implications for the process of acculturation that is taking place between the aristocracy and the rising plutocracy.

The aristocracy, as the traditional upper-upper stratum of Mexican society, is still largely endogamous. The families which belong to this social class obviously are not all united by bonds of kinship and ritual kinship, for its total membership is too large for this to happen. But there is a highly significant tendency toward these ends. Families and individuals try to enlarge their networks of kinsmen, ritual kinsmen, and friends as much as possible. Thus, when social recognition has been extended, a large complex of manners and behavior obtains, which constitutes the endogenous parameters of the group. Those who do not behave according to the rules are not regarded as aristocrats, and this is subtly manifested in whatever interaction takes place exogenously in social and economic situations. The only possible social confusion that may arise occurs with the upper-middle class and the economic and political sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and it is therefore in relationship to them that the expressive behavior of aristocrats must be gauged and positioned.

Within these boundaries, aristocrats regard themselves as the arbiters of social life: specialists in the niceties of ritual and ceremonial behavior, practitioners of complex codes of etiquette and traditional standing, and upholders of good manners and family traditions. It should be noted that probably most of these modes of behavior and manners are shared by all Western aristocracies. It is quite likely that members of the upper-middle class and the *haute bourgeoisie* may have internalized the social ambiance to which they have been exposed outside the context of Mexico City, rather than copied directly from the local aristocracy. This is certainly the case with the upper-middle class of foreign origin and also many members of the non-aristocratic sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*, given the high physical mobility characteristic of the rich and powerful. Still, the aristocracy *in situ* is the validating structure of good manners and genteel behavior, and hence the desirability of imitating it.

In the context of the upper reaches of Mexican social stratification, the relationship between the aristocracy, on the one hand, and the plutocracy and upper-middle class, on the other, must be cast in both structural and expressive terms. Structurally, we have already discussed the context of interaction between the aristocracy and the plutocracy, in which the upper-middle class does not play a significant role. We shall therefore dispense with it in the present analysis. In a nutshell, the catalyst in the aristocracy-plutocracy interaction is economic necessity and social ambition: the desire of the former to expand its economic horizon and acquire a measure of political control, and the ambition of the latter to be regarded not only as economically and politically powerful but socially accepted as well. But structurally this cannot entirely explain the persistence of the aristocracy as a still largely endogamous, viable, and quite self-contained sector of the *haute bourgeoisie*. It is our position that what has ensured a large measure of survival for the aristocracy as a distinct social class are its expressive components: symbolically they buttress the group's self-identity, and the desirability that they evoke strengthens the structure of the group within the *haute bourgeoisie*.

What are the main components of this large complex of expressive behavior? They belong mainly to the domains of the household and kinship behavior, the life cycle and socialization of children, etiquette and personal behavior, patterns of entertainment and celebrations, the fine arts and intellectual interests, interpersonal relations, and patterns of dress and demeanor. We are making the empirical claim that in all instances of social mobility, what attracts or compels the aspiring individual or group to acquire and master the behavior of su-

perordinate stratum is not that it will bring acceptance and make him or the group more similar to the aspired object, but fundamentally that it will confer that security, sense of superiority, and natural demeanor that is the hallmark of those superordinately placed. By definition, those individuals or groups who do not exhibit this belief are not upwardly mobile. Unless we assume this, we cannot explain why the plutocrats care about the social standing of the aristocrats, when they have most of the economic and political power and prestige and could create their own standards. To some extent plutocrats do create their own standards, but there is always that intangible aura of prestige that characterizes aristocrats, and somehow they know that it will disappear only with the *de facto* demise of the aristocracy as self-defined, bounded entity, and by action of their own economic and political inputs. And here we have the crux of what we have referred to as the process of acculturation affecting the homogenization of the three sectors comprising the evolving *haute bourgeoisie*. In our view, what is happening in the upper stratum of Mexican society is a classic example of acculturation (Nutini 1976), in which two mildly antagonistic subcultures are directly confronted: each subculture is contributing significant elements to the acculturative process, a series of acculturative stages are clearly discernible, and the confrontation is heading toward a resolution in which both of the original interacting subcultures will be synthesized into a different entity. Moreover, the process of acculturation in this case is as symmetrical as any likely to be observed - at the global cultural level all documented cases of acculturation are asymmetrical - for neither of the confronted subcultures has sufficient powers of coercion (Nutini 1980).

For the aristocrats, the common body of expressive behavior is a symbolic bond that unites them into a self-directed group, and at the same time affords them a significant measure of security. They regard the various domains of expressive behavior as a legacy of the past, an ostensive validation of the exalted place that they once occupied. The refinement of behavior, the protocol of certain ritual and ceremonial occasions, and the circumscription and *savoir faire* that social interaction requires are always very much in the individual and group consciousness and are regarded as the epitome of civilized living. Be it the way a table is set, tea is served, the type dress worn for a particular occasion, the manner one talks and moves, or the fashion one gets married, there is only one way of doing things, and the aristocratic way is the proper one. This kind of behavior and social interaction obviously imposes restrictions upon the average aristocrat, who is generally quite willing to restrict his or her social life to the familiarity

of an increasingly poorer social milieu. But for some time this attitude has been changing especially among the younger generation. They feel the constraints of their social milieu and are attracted to the glitter and unlimited funds that the plutocracy can spend on entertainment, travel, and all kinds of celebrations. Younger aristocrats may still snobbishly disdain the plutocrats, and probably in the mixed marriages that have taken place they thought twice about taking such a step, but they now do accept as a matter of course the social interaction with plutocrats is a necessity, for many aristocrats are employed in the businesses, banks, and industries controlled by the former. The older generation of aristocrats is fairly uncompromising, and remains endogenous in most respects, as the memory of a glorious past seems to be stronger than the glitter and power of money.

As we have discussed in several contexts, in addition to the aristocracy, the Mexican *haute bourgeoisie* is composed of the political and economic sectors which constitute the plutocracy proper. We also pointed out that the political sector of the plutocracy has been more reluctant and slower to interact with the aristocracy, which itself has been very reticent about entering politics or extending social recognition to politicians. On the other hand, the political sector is not that different from the economic sector of the plutocracy: politicians may be as rich or richer than bankers or industrialists; they come from fairly similar social origins; and they have risen rapidly in the stratification scale. The differences are mainly that the political sector is significantly smaller than the economic sector and does not include foreigners. The former try to maintain a lower social profile, and the latter are much more in the limelight and exhibit definite social ambition. Moreover, politicians acquired their wealth mostly while in office and are well known by the population at large. Because of this they are extremely sensitive about their privacy once they leave office. No such constraints operate in the case of the economic sector of the plutocracy. They are self-made men who are generally desirous of recognition and expend large sums of money in the process. This is what makes this sectors of the plutocracy so predisposed toward the aristocracy. Disregarding the political sector, what kind of social interaction exists between the plutocracy and the aristocracy and in what context does expressive behavior take place?

When plutocrats reach a certain plateau of wealth and economic power, it appears that they develop a rather strong desire for social recognition and interaction with the aristocracy. Whether this is one of the general characteristics throughout the world of the kind of plutocratic mobility that we are dealing with here, we do not know. But

it is certainly one of the most distinct traits of what has been happening during the past 40 years in the upper reaches of Mexican stratification. On the whole, the Mexican plutocracy now is composed of two generations: those who initiated the enterprises that brought them wealth, and their married or unmarried children. The older generation had its beginnings when the aristocracy was significantly more visible than it is today, that is, before the Second World War. Indeed, a few plutocrats started out as underlings in the medium-size enterprises of aristocrats and, in one way or another, have always been related to them. Curiously, two reactions clearly obtained: the would-be plutocrats either developed a strong desire for social acceptance and actively sought to interact with the aristocracy; or for a number of reasons they were scarred and developed a strong aversion to imitating the ways of their social superiors. The younger generation, however, has assiduously sought acceptance and increasing social interaction with the different segments of the aristocracy, and they have not spared any opportunities in this quest.

The natural resistance of aristocrats to this kind of rapport with the plutocracy has slowly broken down, in direct proportion to the latter increasingly acquiring the ways of the former. The average plutocrat today has acquired the outward trappings of aristocratic behavior such as dress, certain patterns of language and demeanor, expressive travel, forms of entertainment, and so on; that is, all those behavioral traits that can be learned rather quickly by the motivated individual and by attending the right schools. But plutocrats know that they cannot manufacture pedigrees or an illustrious past. They realize that can only come with time, and as time passes and they achieve more wealth, it bothers them less. On the basis of our observations of Mexican social stratification in the XX century, and what we know historically about European society, it takes at least three generations for a group in the upper reaches of social stratification to achieve that intangible aristocratic demeanor, the most characteristic behavior of the socially exalted. Three generations is time enough for people to forget their origins, to develop the taste and accumulate the necessary material surroundings (furniture, art, heirlooms), and most of all, to manufacture the legendary or semi-legendary accounts that are such an intrinsic part of the aristocratic tradition. Our preliminary research clearly indicates, for example, that many *nouveaux riches* during the Diaz regime were not accepted as bonafide members of the aristocracy of the time, but have acquired such rank during the past 40 years. In most cases, these were families that by dint of economic shrewdness had held on to their fortunes or even enlarged them throughout

the worst post-revolutionary times. Money is a great social catalyst, especially in periods of such accelerated change as we are witnessing now. On this basis, it is quite likely that the grandchildren of the last original batch of plutocrats will undoubtedly be the aristocrats of the next generations, provided, of course, that another revolution does not interrupt the present developments.

Aristocrats are well aware that by acquiring their expressive behavior, plutocrats are vying for social recognition. Aristocrats regard this as an important commodity, a source of satisfaction and self-validation that is to be used wisely. They know that they cannot press their expressive claims too strongly, for wealth and power will eventually bring the plutocrats the social recognition they desire anyway. In this juncture, the relationship between aristocrats and plutocrats is a delicate one. The former expect to maximize their expressive claim by engaging in enough social interaction without totally giving in, while the latter try to encourage social interaction without appearing overly obsequious. On both sides of this acculturative equation we find a rather wide spectrum of behavior. On the one hand, this ranges from aristocrats who adamantly refuse to accept plutocrats as their social equals and have nothing but contempt for them, to those who maintain that as a matter of survival it is necessary to achieve an intimate rapport between social status and power and wealth. On the other hand, there are plutocrats who regard aristocrats as anachronistic, unproductive drones who feel strongly drawn toward aristocrats and wish to cement strong social and matrimonial ties. The equation today is leaning significantly toward the liberal side of the spectrum, including primarily the richest and the younger on both sides.

For 40 years, the aristocracy and the plutocracy have been in interaction, that is, since the latter began to exert power and influence. We do not know the details of what has happened to these two groups in this period of interaction, but we can make some generalizations. Starting from indifference and disdain on the part of the aristocrats, and mild awe or unconcern on the part of the plutocrats, the two groups have grown increasingly closer in a variety of aspects. This can be seen by specifying the context in which the groups have interacted.

The principal context of interaction has always been economic: the world of business, banking, and manufacturing. The rich aristocrats are of course a part of that world, and as such, they interact intimately with plutocrats: in business clubs, associations, and on the inevitable social occasions that arise as a result. Many aristocrats, on the other hand, interact with plutocrats generally from a position of economic subordination: as a high or middle level executive in banks

and business enterprises, or as a borrower of money or buyer of products when he is an independent entrepreneur. Probably the only aristocrats who do not come into direct contact with plutocrats are those who practice the liberal professions; but even then, there is indirect contact. In all cases, however, there are social occasions when plutocrats and aristocrats interact: club reunions, dinner parties, cocktail parties, and so on. Quite often executive and middle level male and female personnel with aristocratic backgrounds are drawn into the ranks of banking and business enterprises. Given the international character that these enterprises have acquired in the last decade or so, this personnel is regarded as a considerable asset, given the social nuances and interpersonal *savoir faire* that such business transactions involve. We can see here that plutocrats are making direct use of the social resources that they deem desirable in those with aristocratic backgrounds, in addition to enhancing social interaction with the aristocracy *per se*. The occasions for social interaction in this context are extensive, but it takes place primarily within the environment of the bank or company, occasionally in the homes of plutocrats, but seldom in the homes of aristocrats. That is, the social courtesies and recognition are not symmetrical, or at least are markedly skewed.

The other significant contexts of aristocratic-plutocratic interaction are the world of music and fine arts, and the domain of sports (polo, equitation, sailing). With respect to the former, both aristocrats and plutocrats join forces in sponsoring artistic and musical events, and sometimes special shows of painting and sculpture. For public relation purposes, quite frequently the main banking institutions - the almost exclusive domain of the powerful plutocracy - have exhibitions of the best Mexican collections of Colonial pottery, family portraits, porcelains, and so on, most often the property of aristocratic families. These various events are always occasions for social gatherings, but again, invariably they occur in the fairly impersonal ambiance of banks or other public buildings. Social gatherings of aristocrats and plutocrats in the context of sports are probably the most intimate and include the homes of the two groups. This is easily explained in that sports such as polo and equitation involve strong bonds of friendship among those who practice them, in addition to the fact that these sports involve the richest among the aristocrats. Thus, the greatest rapport between aristocrats and plutocrats has taken place among this small group, in which we observed the highest degree of social homogenization and recognition.

Perhaps we could summarize with an example of the ways in which the expressive behavior of the aristocracy has been a kind of

model for the upward social aspirations of the rising plutocracy. Mr. Francisco X-Y is the chairman of the board and principal stockholder of one of the largest banks in Mexico. His personal fortune is estimated at more than 150 million dollars, and it has been amassed in about 30 years. From middle-class beginnings he has become one of the top 10 banker-industrialists in the country through perseverance and a shrewd business mind. Now he dabbles in international finance and his name often appears in the press. Early in his career, when he realized he had a good chance of becoming an important captain of finance, he asked an aristocrat from his native provincial city to become his right-hand man and general factotum. Fernando W-Z belongs to a distinguished family, is well educated, and has a flair for public relations. As Mr. X-Y advanced in the business world and became socially prominent in economic circles, the importance of Mr. W-Z became increasingly apparent and indispensable. Mr. X-Y is a self-made man, unschooled in the sophisticated manners and ways of the upper-class, but with enough sense of the social to realize the advantages of acquiring their demeanor. This has been an important job for Mr. W-Z, and for over 20 years he has guided Mr. X-Y in a period of transition from strictly middle-class behavior to the more visible upper-class trappings of personal manners, the niceties of entertainment, household decoration, and so on. Through the offices of Mr. W-Z and others in similar position, Mr. X-Y and his family are now well connected in the aristocratic circles of Mexico City. He has gained entrance into the homes of the most socially prominent, and in his own home he lavishly entertains the leaders of the business world as well as distinguished Mexican and European aristocrats. Mr. X-Y knows quite well that it is his money and power that has made him acceptable and that he will never "really" be regarded by most aristocrats as one of them, nor does he care much about it. But he also knows that his children will be implicitly accepted, and in a way already are. In fact, except for the most subtle nuances, Mr. X-Y's children are integrated into the aristocratic milieu and behave accordingly. It is clear in this example that Mr. W-Z has been the acculturative model that has guided the transformation of Mr. X-Y and his family. As in all cases of acculturation, the change has not been one-sided, for Mr. W-Z has undergone significant transformations as a result of his intimate interaction with Mr. X-Y, which is beside the point to detail here.

This individual example is in itself a good model of what is happening to the aristocracy and plutocracy as global entities. The confrontation has not been even throughout the configuration of these two sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and there are undoubtedly ma-

ny subtleties and shades in this process of acculturation that our study will document. It is clear, however, that the richer and more powerful the plutocrats are the more they are drawn into the process, and the more plutocratic or business oriented the aristocrats are with whom the plutocrats come into contact, the more rapid and thorough the acculturation that proceeds.

It is apparent that in the sometimes reluctant, sometimes tentative, still rather asymmetrical rapprochement between the aristocracy and the plutocracy, there is one domain that the former has regarded as the last bastion of its social life, namely, the ambiance of the household. When the endogenous exclusivity of the household as a place of social gatherings and as a symbol of the group's self-identity comes to an end, the aristocracy will have consciously relinquished any claims of social superordination. It is our empirical claim that this is beginning to happen and will be accomplished within the present generation. During the past four decades there has been a slow but steady progression of social recognition of the plutocracy by the aristocracy. This has been largely conditioned by the former's acquisition of the manners, mores, and behavior of the latter - at least a valued expressive common denominator. Conversely, the plutocracy has made possible the greater economic participation of the aristocracy, thereby creating an attractive confluence of interests. Suspicion and resentment remain on both sides of this social equation, but it is evident that the natural conservatism of the socially prominent has been mostly responsible for preventing a more intimate and rapid amalgamation of these two sectors of the Mexican *haute bourgeoisie*.

Finally, we can summarize the process of acculturation that has affected the aristocracy and plutocracy of Mexico during the past 40 years or so in three developmental stages. (1) During the Second World War, the new plutocracy makes its appearance as a group to be reckoned with economically. Its social recognition by the aristocracy comes slowly, and it is probably not until the late 50s that its presence becomes generally established. This period is characterized by tentative, groping advances on the part of the plutocracy, the cautious appraisal and grudging expectation on the part of the aristocracy. In nearly two decades, the plutocracy sheds its middle-class outward trappings and acquires many of the aristocracy. The social interaction of the two sectors takes place mainly in the public context of business and banking, and on the whole it is quite formal. (2) Since the late sixties until about five years ago, the plutocracy becomes well versed in the manners, niceties, and rituals of upper-class genteel behavior. It takes a more forceful social position and makes its wealth and economic power an

explicit instrument of assertive social mobility. The aristocracy becomes increasingly more willing to extend social recognition, as the manners and mores of the plutocracy become increasingly similar to their own. Social interaction is extended to the home, but asymmetrically so, in that plutocrats open themselves up willingly and lavishly, whereas the aristocrats largely retain the home as a last bastion of endogenous expression. (3) Since the mid-seventies we could say that the acculturative cycle of expressive transference from the aristocracy to the plutocracy is coming to an end, and that the homogenization of subcultural patterns has almost been achieved. The plutocrats have been sufficiently transformed to pass for upper-upper class, while the aristocrats have significantly toned down their ancient claims so as to interact as equals with those who hold most of the wealth and economic power. The center of social interaction has now significantly shifted to the almost sacred preserve of the aristocratic household, and only some of the most conservative and recalcitrant aristocrats do not extend full social recognition to the average plutocrat. Inter marriages between aristocrats and plutocrats are beginning to take place, but this has not yet become generalized.

Intermarriage between aristocrats and plutocrats probably will become generalized within the next 15 years. When it does, and the cherished endogamy of the aristocracy comes to an end, it will certainly accelerate the conclusion of the last acculturative stage: the *coup de grace* of the aristocracy as a self-defined, highly conscious, and well delimited group of the *haute bourgeoisie*. It should be borne in mind that the foregoing developmental sequence is tentative and subject to modifications as our study proceeds. There are obvious individual deviations and the structure of the various segments into which both the aristocracy and plutocracy are divided must be taken into consideration for a definitive analysis. But this acculturative scheme does account for the general process of social mobility that has affected the upper reaches of Mexican social stratification (5).

The final stage of transference and amalgamation

At the beginning of our discussion we stated that it was with some hesitation that we would use the term aristocracy to characterize the descendants of the old ruling class of Mexico. It is a fact that this well delineated group represents the pinnacle of social status, but it is also a fact that the group has no political power and only moderate wealth. Our justification for using the term aristocracy is essentially

taxonomic, in that we want to discriminate properly the three main sectors of the *haute bourgeoisie*. Despite their awareness as a class and pride for their illustrious past, most aristocrats realize their anomalous position: they know that they are the holders of social prestige (and know how to manipulate it) but cannot buttress it with the kind of wealth that had traditionally accompanied it. When asked to define their social class, most aristocrats today respond «éramos aristócratas pero ahora somos de la clase alta» 'we were aristocrats but now we belong to the upper class'. Even the few who quixotically maintain that they are still aristocrats by virtue of lineage and tradition qualify their answer by saying «aunque ahora lo único que vale es el dinero y pronto vamos a pasar a la historia» 'though money is the only thing that counts and we shall soon pass into oblivion'. Seventy years of hardship and loss of great wealth have made aristocrats realize that social status and prestige without adequate wealth can carry them only so far, and that they are reaching a period when they will no longer be able to maintain their collective consciousness and self-identity. But how will they go into oblivion, or in our terminology, how will they become undifferentiated from the other members of the Mexican *haute bourgeoisie* as a class?

The younger married generation express this final transformation well when they say that their children (now infants to children in their early teens) will grow up in a different world: that they will no longer be able to guide their interaction with youngsters of the plutocracy and upper-middle class; and that as a consequence, many of the customs that were exclusively theirs will disappear. Indeed, most sensible parents are in subtle ways preparing their children for this change. Young married couples view the transformation not altogether negatively; a kind of release from the past and a more realistic attitude, consonant with their present economic position. For the older generations, what they are experiencing is a sad blow, and for them, the future augurs only the painful experience of witnessing the demise of centuries of development. Probably the only reward that they personally feel is in having educated the parvenues that came after them, as they are fond of pointing out. In many ways, most aristocrats lead dual lives: in the security of their endogenous circles, in the exclusivity of their homes, they constitute a closed social group where they can express themselves freely and outsiders are regarded with suspicion; in their interaction with the plutocracy, and occasionally with the upper-middle class, they are controlled, sometimes condescending, occasionally expansive, but always with a definite sense of detachment. (The social interaction between aristocrats and plutocrats may be descri-

bed by the old Mexican saying, «juntos pero no revueltos» [loosely translated, 'we may gather together but we are not the same'], which in many ways characterizes social mobility and social interaction along the entire stratification scale: people may interact on a face-to-face basis as a social lubricant, but the class or group barriers remain in place). This does not mean that they pretend or actually believe in extending full social equality in the maximization of specific, mostly economic, goals. Wedding celebrations, for example, are big affairs and have become probably the most important occasions in which aristocrats pay their social debts to plutocrats and business associates. This is an uncomfortable position, and it will be a kind of deliverance for the aristocrats when they become one with the plutocrats, an opinion that is acquiring increasing respectability.

It is more difficult to gauge the ideology and attributes of the plutocracy toward the aristocracy. It is clear, however, that they have not gloated in their overwhelming economic dominance. Rather, the average plutocrat has learned from the aristocrats not to flaunt wealth and to discourage ostentatious displays. Recently, their self-assurance has been bolstered by contact and alliances in their own right with increasing numbers of the European plutocracy and aristocracy. They have achieved a social consciousness and a level of behavior that is essentially that of the aristocracy. Their wealth and economic power is enough to sustain them as the dominant sector of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and to dismiss the slights of the most snobbish aristocrats. Plutocrats know that the future is theirs, and that in the end, social status, prestige, and the material symbols that accompany them, cannot be a match for wealth and economic power. More than aristocrats, plutocrats know their history well: lineage and social manners are essential, but they persist only when buttressed with the appropriate power and wealth. This has been the recurrent theme in Mexican class structure since the Conquest, and bourgeois revolutions have not been able to change it. Since we assume that there is no Marxist revolution in sight, the class realignment that we have briefly outlined here will probably run its natural course.

We have briefly outlined the historical development of the ruling class of Mexico, the landed aristocracy, from the time of the Conquest to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 (Nutini, Roberts & Cervantes 1982), described the changes that have occurred during the past 70 years, and outlined the expressive ethnography of the aristocracy today. We have emphasized the recurrent themes in 450 years of stratification and elucidated some of the principles and economic and political conditions which have resulted in the present upper-class structure. We

have taken special care to discuss the Mexican aristocracy in relationship to the plutocracy and other upwardly mobile elements, lest we commit the common mistake of studying a social class in isolation. Throughout, we have formulated a number of working hypotheses, and at the same time we have carved out several methodological and substantive domains for investigation.

Discussion and conclusions

Generally speaking anthropologists have little difficulty in agreeing that some cultural domains are primarily expressive or that some specified pattern embodies some expressive components, but there is no widely accepted definition of the category, "expressive culture", which is precise and clear (6). In its simplest terms, however, expressive culture is always viewed as manifesting, embodying, or symbolizing something else, whether that something else represents psychological attitudes, attributes, or patterns found in the culture. If the dichotomy between work and play were valid, expressive culture would deal with play, or if the dichotomy between instrumental and non-instrumental held, expressive culture would deal with the non-instrumental (at least in the conventional sense).

Although expressive patterns vary widely from culture to culture, it is clear that all cultures, ranging from the simplest to the most complex, possess arrays of expressive patterns or complexes of patterns (domains). Expression in one form or another is a cultural universal, and this universality must rest in the end on the common psychological denominator of humanity. It is in this mold that we have undertaken the study of the Mexican aristocracy, for we expect to demonstrate that expressive behavior constitutes a significant element of social stratification and social structure.

Until 1910, Mexican aristocrats commanded great political and economic power. The expressive array to be found in their particular subculture was most extensive. There were some syncretic elements in their array stemming from Mexico's rich and dramatic history, but primarily their expressive array stemmed from their own European heritage. This derivative nature of the expressive array was by no means static because it was constantly being renewed and refurbished as a result of European communication and influence. The expressive center of the aristocratic subculture was to be found in the general aristocratic subcultures of Spain, France, and Italy with lesser connections in England and other European countries.

This expressive world changed radically in the years following 1910. The aristocratic European models were certainly modified. Automobiles, motion pictures, television, dress styles, and thousands of other innovations altered the world of expression. The expressive world did not stand still, but there were changes that characterized the Mexican aristocracy in particular. As the world changed and as they lost power, the subculture of the aristocracy manifested expressive withdrawal. Some of this was situational. For example, lacking the large estates it was difficult to maintain the elaborate expressive horse culture which was once so salient, and at the same time, during this period the horse was being replaced by the automobile. Some of the changes were expressive correlates of the loss of power and wealth. It cannot be documented here, but large public displays may be an adjunct of power in part because of the needs satisfied by those displays within the aristocratic and within the non-aristocratic sectors of the population. Such displays, for example, may actually reduce envy and the feeling of being envied. Other changes were undoubtedly due to the dynamics of the new life. At this stage of the analysis, however, we can say that expressive activities moved steadily along a continuum from public to private. Today, the surviving aristocratic expressive culture is essentially private in nature, and it is largely satisfying to the members of the subculture or to those who aspire to be members.

During the past 70 years the nature of expressive communication changed. The European contacts and orientations were maintained throughout, but there was increasing downward mobility which was accompanied by an abandonment of a number of expressive forms. Some members of the aristocracy simply could not sustain the private forms of expression because of cost or other inadequacies. At the same time there was a significant opening of expressive avenues to plutocrats who were eager to learn new ways. Here the forms of expression may not have been individually satisfying in a direct way, but their symbolic significance led to other satisfactions. Here and there, too, aristocrats were actively teaching non-aristocrats how to behave in expressive spheres. All of these forces undoubtedly led to a reduction of expressive intolerance for the aristocrats in general and to an increase of expressive intolerance in a small number of aristocrats who closed ranks and raised new barriers to social penetration.

Throughout history, aristocrats in significant numbers have manifested an interest in strategy expressions. The games of chess, Go, and the like were once aristocratic games which modelled the intricacies of social systems struggling for power. This strategic coloration has not yet emerged in our investigation of the Mexican aristocracy.

It is true that the aristocrats of Mexico did not dominate the behavioral sphere of the military as did aristocrats in Europe at one time. Still, the prevailing color of the aristocratic expressive life for men seems to have been that of the potent, the style of people who approach the world as if it were a game of physical skill with strategy. It was also the case that there was no large emphasis on fortunism and gambling was not salient. One would predict, however, that there has always been submerged strategy, particularly with the women, and that this strategy is surfacing now.

The literature on expressive travel suggests an association between a need for stimulation and a need for self-testing. The emphasis on expressive travel remains strong in the aristocratic subculture, but in general the need for stimulation appears to be dropping. The withdrawn expression favors the augmenting stance and the puritanical position. The hard core aristocrats appear to have turned inward and to have adopted expressive forms which do not entail a high need for stimulation, such as in the increase in importance of interior decoration as compared to the reduced emphasis on horsemanship.

The relationship between the contracting aristocrats and the expanding plutocrats is mutually profitable in several domains. Control of the expressive system always represents power, which is both symbolic and actual. Upwardly mobile persons seek expressive validation, and it is often the case that expressive barriers are the most difficult to penetrate. Expressive behavior can be extremely subtle - for example, patterns of dress, language etiquette, and the like - and fine grained differences can be easily noted by skilled gate keepers. No one, even with tutors, achieves expressive transition easily, and this situation is one on which aristocratic tutors have capitalized.

It is also the case, however, that some of the expressive forms controlled by the aristocrats are appropriate to positions of power and wealth. The very presence of power generates expressive need, if the conflict-enculturation theory is correct (Roberts & Sutton-Smith 1962), and some of the expressive forms known to aristocrats can meet similar needs in the increasingly more powerful plutocrats. Downwardly mobile aristocrats, too, are significant for they, like upwardly mobile plutocrats, must abandon expressive forms and add new ones.

Basically, then, the expressive culture of the Mexican aristocracy illustrates a number of concepts, such as expressive withdrawal, expressive intolerance, expressive enculturation, changing action styles, game involvement, and so on. But our major finding so far is that the expressive array of the aristocracy has become its main social asset in the process of acculturation and class mobility affecting all sectors of

the *haute bourgeoisie*. The aristocratic sector has survived mainly because its expressive array is attractive to plutocrats and politicians as a means of validating their achieved wealth and political power.

Finally, three additional findings may be noted. First, the traditional expressive array of the Mexican aristocracy has become less satisfying in part through contraction and in part through loss of fit with antecedent conflicts. Involvement levels have dropped in relation to the endogenous safety of the group. Second, the traditional expressive array which persists has gained in symbolic significance: as the expressive resources diminish, those which remain represent an entire way of life. Third, new elements in the expressive array have been added selectively, either because of their symbolic value - they enhance the expressive resources - or because they mitigate existing or newly developed conflicts.

Notes

1. This paper is based on several years of unstructured observation and four months of data collection (September, October, November and December of 1979) on the *haute bourgeoisie* in Mexico City. We gratefully acknowledge that the data collection was done under the sponsorship of a grant (RO-00129-80-0122) from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In another article, recently published in this same journal (1982, 6, 1:3-37), we analyzed the historical development of the Mexican aristocracy from the Spanish conquest to the present.

2. It is interesting to note that the vacuum left by the aristocratic exodus from Puebla was quickly filled by successful state politicians and a *mélange* of foreign (mostly Lebanese and Spanish) and domestic *nouveaux riches*, who in the short period of one generation came to dominate the social, economic, and political life of the city and state of Puebla. This example could be replicated in many provincial cities throughout Mexico during the past 50 years.

3. This appears to be a universal phenomenon in upwardly mobile sectors of loosely stratified societies. In the case of Mexico during the past two decades, the economic and psychological struggle of individuals and groups has been exacerbated by the rapid and almost chaotic nature of the change in the middle and upper-middle classes.

4. In the contemporary setting, more significant than the knowledge of actual or potential title holders is the identification of the families to members of which the titles were originally granted. The five or six families that monopolized the oldest and most distinguished titles are very much in the group's consciousness, and they constitute a rallying point for the dying aristocracy.

5. This acculturative scheme, however, does not account for the process of downward mobility that has greatly reduced the aristocracy since the onset of the Mexican Revolution. We estimate that the total membership of the aristocracy today is less than 50% of what it was in 1910, for the total population of Mexico that has quadruplicated since then.

6. This brief discussion of expressive culture is based on a line of inquiry devoted

to various aspects of expressive behavior which is reflected in numerous publications. This is not the place to cite these publications in full, but some representative citations are: Roberts (1976); Roberts & Chick (1979); Roberts & Mattrass (1980); Roberts, Hutchinson & Hanscom (1980).

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Summary

The term "Mexican aristocracy" is applied to the social group comprising the descendants of the members of the ruling class of *encomenderos* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the plutocratic owners of *haciendas* and mines and great merchant chiefs from the early eighteenth century to the end of the colonial period, and the fa-

milies that dominated the country's politics and economy from Independence until the end of the regime of Porfirio Díaz.

The hierarchy within the aristocracy involved two factors, antiquity of lineage and wealth, with the latter outweighing the former. The present paper considers symbols and elements of class cohesion as well as the differences between the various sectors of that class and their relationships.

Sommario

Con il termine di aristocrazia messicana si intende quel gruppo sociale composto da coloro che discendono da antenati facenti parte delle classe dirigente degli *encomenderos* dei secoli XVI e XVII, dei plutocrati proprietari di *haciendas* e di miniere e gestori del grande commercio dagli inizi del XVIII secolo al termine del periodo coloniale, e infine di quelle famiglie che dominarono la politica e l'economia del paese dall'indipendenza alla fine del porfirato. All'interno dell'aristocrazia la gerarchia si articola tenendo presente i due fattori dell'antichità del lignaggio e della ricchezza, quest'ultimo risultando prevalente sul primo. Nel lavoro qui presentato vengono presi in esame i simboli e gli elementi di coesione della classe, ma anche le differenze esistenti tra i vari settori che la compongono e le relazioni tra di esse intercorrenti.

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