

**THE YAQUI REBELLION OF 1740:
PRELUDE TO JESUIT EXPULSION
FROM NEW SPAIN**

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RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza los alcances de una rebelión indígena en el contexto misional jesuita del noroeste de Nueva España. La rebelión de los yaqui de 1740 contó con el apoyo de diferentes naciones indígenas y se desató a causa de las presiones laborales ejercidas por las autoridades civiles y los colonos sobre la población misionera. Sin embargo, el clima insurreccional se fue construyendo durante la década anterior frente a las prácticas autocráticas y paternalistas impuestas por los jesuitas en las misiones. Más adelante yaquis y jesuitas se alinearon a causa de hambrunas y desastres naturales. Finalmente, la rebelión constituyó el preludio de la expulsión de los jesuitas de la región, luego de la cual se produjo un proceso de secularización de las doctrinas de la región y el asentamiento de españoles y castas en los pueblos indígenas como jueces y capataces. En este sentido, el trabajo muestra, a partir de un caso concreto, la influencia de las reformas borbónicas en la reconfiguración del mapa étnico, social y económico del norte de Nueva España.

Palabras claves: yaquis - NO de Nueva España - misiones jesuíticas - secularización - rebeliones indígenas

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the ranges of an indigenous rebellion in the Jesuit mission context of Northwest New Spain. Supported by different indigenous nations, the Yaqui rebellion of 1740 was caused by the labor pressures imposed by civil authorities and colonizers on the population of the mission. However, the insurrectional environment was originated during the previous decade in an attempt to face the autocratic and paternalist practices imposed by the Jesuits in their Missions project. Later on, the Yaqui aligned with the priests because of hunger and natural disasters. But the rebellion was one of the events that prelude the Jesuits expulsion in the region, after which a process of secularization of the *doctrinas* began and Spaniards and *castas* came to settled down in towns as judges and *capataces*. In this sense, the paper studies, from an specific case, the influence of borbonic reforms and the reconfiguration of the social, economic and ethnic map of northern New Spain.

Key Words: yaquis - NW of New Spain - jesuit missions - secularization - indigenous rebellions

INTRODUCTION

In 1767, the Bourbon monarch Charles III unceremoniously expelled the entire Jesuit order from New Spain and the rest of Spanish America, laid claim on the immense wealth Jesuits had accumulated, and reasserted the Crown as the supreme authority over the vast territory Jesuit missionaries had once held sway. In New Spain's northwest, the expulsion did not produce as much widespread disorder as it did in other parts of the empire; it actually culminated an ongoing process of declining Jesuit influence over the Yaqui and other mission populations and within the larger frontier society. Master reformer Jose de Galvez considered the drastic measure a necessary first step in his grand design to pacify the rebellious Indians on the frontier and to revitalize the mining economy. The long-neglected colonists and miners of this remote region naturally welcomed the visitor general's farsighted vision and energetic initiatives. While the Crown transferred the recently missionized or still unsubjected peoples of Sonora to Franciscan missionaries, at the same time it intended to secularize the Jesuit missions of Ostimuri and Sinaloa, that is, to integrate these Indians into the developing Spanish society as its source of docile, cheap labor.

Yaquis facilitated Galvez's political and economic reforms in several ways, but also thwarted his other plans for total integration. Long before the visitor general had arrived on the scene, Yaquis had begun asserting their independence from the Jesuit missionaries, who, after more than a century of peaceful tutelage, still insisted on treating the Yaqui people as immature wards needy of their vigilant protection and constant guidance. The challenge to Jesuit hegemony could be traced back to 1740 year of the first, and only, major Yaqui rebellion while under missionary rule. While not the only revolt to rock the Jesuit empire in the late 17th and early 18th century, it was one of the most serious and its leaders, unquestionably, the most distinctive and articulate. Following the 1740 uprising, the Yaqui mission itself experienced a new threat, as it assumed for the first time a defense posture against rebellious Seris, Pimas and other Indians who were aggressively pushing the unstable frontier line farther and farther south. Both the rebellion and the exigency of defense brought Yaquis into closer contact with colonial military personnel, whose growing presence within the mission broke the resident Jesuit father's

monopoly of authority. Together with accelerated Yaqui migration to the mines after 1740, these experiences irreparably weakened Jesuit supremacy; hence, significantly softening the impact of their expulsion in 1767.

THE REBELLION OF 1740

In the colonial history of Mexico's northwest, the 1740 Yaqui rebellion was one of the most notable events. Not only did it erupt in the region's most successful and prosperous mission, but it posed a monumental threat when the Yaqui rebels inspired a large following among the mission peoples of the other three great rivers of the region: the Mayo, the Fuerte, and the Sinaloa. With only the Pimas Altos of Sonora uninvolved in any significant way, the rebellion which came to include just about every indigenous nation of the northwest presented to many Spaniards the frightening specter of a race war bent on annihilating the small white population and consequently, Spanish colonial rule.

Three interrelated issues of the Jesuit-Spanish power struggle came to a head to produce the 1740 Yaqui rebellion and others that followed. In the first place, as their prospects for development brightened, miners and *hacendados* intensified pressures of more Indian provisions and especially labor. Second, local civil and military authorities more forcefully asserted their rightful jurisdiction over temporal affairs in the missions. Finally, Indians themselves began, for the first time, to express desires for certain fundamental changes in the mission system. Faced with these challenges all at once, the Jesuit father responded not so much with strategic flexibility as with a stubborn defensiveness that with time and frustration dissolved into resignation.

While the rebellion's magnitude obviously caused deep concern to Jesuits and secular authorities alike, the origin and methods of pacification raised the most heated and intense discussions. Among those who had a stake in its outcome, there was little agreement on the crucial questions: What caused the outbreak? how to resolve the conflict best? who were the actual rebel leaders? and what were their motivations? Most bitterly disputed, perhaps, was the question of who provoked or encouraged the Yaquis to rise up: Governor Manuel de Huidobro and his "bad government," or Jesuit missionaries and their intolerably authoritarian and arbitrary rule? Huidobro, whom Viceroy Duque de la Conquista removed from office in January 1741, could only regain his honor and his office by proving Jesuit guilt. For their part, the morally devastated Jesuits absolved themselves of all blame by turning the full force of their argument and influence against the governor, feared and despised for his well-known prosecularization sentiments. To sift



through the charges and countercharges high officials, from viceroys and their advisors to the Council of the Indies and the Crown in Spain, scrupulously and repeatedly examined every piece of data concerning this controversial rebellion. The lengthy investigation, not concluded until 1744, produced a ream of documentation from which the following events and relationships emerge as significant factors¹.

The gradual buildup of tension in the Yaqui mission and vicinity could be traced to a series of conflicts beginning in September 1735, when Pedro Alvarez Acevedo, militia captain, *vecino* and *minero* of the Real de San Francisco Asis of Rio Chico complained to local authorities that he had to suspend all work in his mines for lack of *operarios*. Other *vecinos* and *mineros* of Ostimuri soon chimed in, noting that it was bad enough the year before, but this year, “not one *peón* could be found,,” despite Governor Huidobro’s authorization of fortnightly *tapisques* of twenty men per rotation. They blamed the Jesuit *padres* for their problems. According to *vecino* José Ignacio Valenzuela, *Padre* Diego González of Potam *pueblo* counseled his Yaquis not to consider themselves the Spaniards’ *topiles* or servants, and even dictated for them a written refusal to comply with the call up of *tapisques*².

¹ The eminent Spanish historian Luis Navarro Garcia wrote an account of the 1740 Yaqui rebellion (Navarro Garcia 1966). He based his research on documents located in the Archivo de Indias, in Sevilla. For a detailed description of these sources, see pp. 9-13 of his book. Many of the documents Navarro Garcia consulted in Sevilla are duplicated in the *Pastells Collection of Rome*, on microfilm at the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library of St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri. The present analysis of the rebellion is based on the primary sources in the Pastells Collection. The most interesting document in Pastells is a compilation of copies of documents pertaining to the case, stretching over a period of some ten years. In June 1744, the Viceroy Conde de Fuenclara submitted to the Crown the final and definitive report on the rebellion. In addition to his own cover letter, he forwarded hundreds of pages of copies evidence from all parties involved in the conflict. Organized essentially in chronological order, these documents provide a detailed narrative of the uprising. Letter of Viceroy Conde de Fuenclara to His Majesty, June 25, 1744. Pastells 32: 323-712. Hereafter cited as Fuenclara (1744). Unless otherwise noted, information contained in the present analysis comes from this source. Whenever necessary, specific documents in Fuenclara (1744) will be noted.

² Fuenclara (1744) begins with an account of the 1735 clash between *mineros* and missionaries over the question of Indian laborers for the mines. Navarro Garcia also begins with this series of incidents, citing as his source a report Huidobro wrote in 1743. Huidobro did not just suddenly remember these incidents in 1743; he had actually filed routine reports on these events as they occurred. Then, in September 1740, during the rebellion, he wrote the viceroy railing against Jesuit abuses of Indians and their disregard for secular authorities. In this letter he alluded to his earlier reports on the 1735 quarrels. Huidobro to Viceroy, Alamos, September 4, 1740, copied in Viceroy Duque de la Conquista’s report to the Crown, Mexico, 9 October 1740 (Pastells 29: 529-604).

Later that year, in December, the exasperated *alcalde mayor* of Ostimuri, Miguel de Quiroz, lashed out at the Jesuits in a letter to Governor Huidobro, accusing the *padres* of being “despotic lords” who deemed their authority over the Indians so absolute that there were no “sovereign power” above them³. Commenting on this incident at a later date, Jesuits admitted that they intervened to prevent their charges from going to the mines insisting, however, that they had acted justifiably because the *mineros* only paid a “ridiculous wage, or with worthless goods”. They also disparaged militia captain Acevedo, who lodged the original complaint, of being a *miserable* who found it easier “to deceive the Indians than to deceive children”. Furthermore, Jesuits maintained, Yaquis did not want to obey out of concern for their own health because of the sixty-league distance to Acevedo’s mines⁴.

Not to be outdone, Jesuits weighed in with their own analysis of what went wrong in the missions. They accused *vecino* Don Andres de Quiroz of coveting a piece of land in the Tepahui mission, adjacent to the Yaqui. The Indians resisted this attempted encroachment “because they did not want Spaniards to live among them”. Tepahui resident *padre* Patricio Imaz then escorted both parties to see *Padre Visitador* Pedro Reinaldo to resolve the dispute in a “just and friendly way.” Together Fathers González, Imaz and Reinaldo, “in view of the justness” of the Indians’ position, deterred Quiroz from pressing his claim. But when Governor Huidobro appointed Don

³ Quiroz to Huidobro, Los Cedros, December 11, 1735 (Fuenclara 1744, Pastells 32: 333-34). According to *Auditor de Guerra* Marquez de Altamira, whose lengthy report was included in Fuenclara 1744, the authorized quota of Indian workers was four percent of the adult male population from designated *pueblos*. Altamira also claimed that Lt. Governor Manuel de Mena rescinded Quiroz’s order for calling up *tapisques*, in view of Quiroz’s known hostility against Jesuits, so clearly local secular authorities were not united on this matter. *Auditor de Guerra* Marquez de Altamira report, Mexico, 12 June 1743, in (Fuenclara 1744, Pastells 32: 516-63).

⁴ (Fuenclara 1744 in Pastells 32: 356-58). Lt. Gov. Mena, one of the fathers’ few allies among local authorities, submitted the Jesuits’ defense. There were several inconsistencies in his report. After claiming that Yaquis did not wish to travel the 60 leagues to work in Acevedo’s mines, elsewhere he noted that Yaqui work teams often traveled as much as 400 leagues to look for work in mines. He also observed that one reason Yaquis sought mining work was because there were too many people for the available land in the mission. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on this problem, which would seem to be a most serious one. The issue of land would be brought up again, primarily by Yaquis and by missionaries, but not so much by Spaniards, who seemed more preoccupied in mid-18th century over the shortage of laborers than scarcity of land. Other sources confirm the long distances that Yaquis often traveled to work in mines. *Auditor* Altamira stated that Yaquis were known to travel as much as 300 leagues to work in mines. See Altamira’s report, June 12, 1743, in Fuenclara 1744, Pastells 32: 516-63.

Andres's brother, Don Miguel, to be *alcalde mayor* of Ostimuri, the missionaries interpreted the act as retaliation for their intervention in the Tepahui dispute. According to the Jesuits, the two Quiroz brothers "liberally offered Indian land to Spaniards", causing enormous pain that began to plunge the Indians "into desperation". Huidobro himself was no better, for he too measured off land in the Yaqui mission and encouraged the people to demand *clerigos* to replace the Jesuit *padres*. It was Spanish usurpation of Indian land that led to the outbreak of rebellion in 1740, Jesuits concluded in no uncertain terms⁵.

While the battle line was being drawn between Jesuits on the one hand, and the governor and certain *vecinos* on the other, another source of conflict appeared. In March 1736, Yaqui militia captain and *gobernador* of Raum mission *pueblo*, Juan Ignacio Usacamea, better known as *El Muni*, led a group of unhappy Yaquis to see *Alcalde* Quiroz with a list of grievances. First, they expressed dissatisfaction with their own captain-general, Cristobal de Gurrola, for treating his people cruelly and unfairly. The highest and presumably elected native magistrate, Gurrola was most likely handpicked and imposed by the Jesuits as had been the practice for a long time; he remained unpopular with his own people and consistently loyal to the *padres*. Muni and *compañeros* appeared even more agitated about a small but highly visible and vocal group of outsiders then residing in their *pueblos*. Labeled *coyotes* by the Yaquis, these were *mestizos*, *mulatos*, other *castas* or even Indians of other nations whom the Jesuits had installed in positions of trust and confidence within the mission. The coyote Juan Frias, for example, was *padre* Diego González's *fiscal* at Huirivis *pueblo*. Already resentful of the coyotes' elevated status, Muni *et al* accused this abusive, greedy lot of oppressing Yaquis in numerous ways, including extortion, land usurpation, and conspiracy to turn their *padres* against them. To illustrate his point, Muni related a personally galling incident that was typical of coyote behavior. Juan Frias accused Muni of stealing Father González's storehouse keys with

⁵ The major Jesuit document on the 1740 rebellion had the lengthy title of "*Hecho de la raíz, causas y progresos, hasta su conclusion de la rebellion de los Indios Hiaquis, Maios y Convezinos en la Gobernacion de Sinaloa el ano de 1740, siendo Gobernador Vitalicio Don Manuel Bernal de Huidobro,*" Pastells 18: 70-90. This was officially an anonymous report appended to Padre Mateo Ansaldo's final Jesuit report on the rebellion entitled "*El P. Mateo Ansaldo Rector del Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo de Mejico sobre la sublevacion de los indios presente este escrito contra las injurias que el Huidobro pone en las autos que a los R.P. entregaron,*" (December 5, 1743, Pastells 18: 91-104). Father Gerardo Decorme, noted 20th century Jesuit historian, believes that the author of the anonymous report was none other than the controversial Father Diego González; see Decorme, p. 333. Unless otherwise noted, Jesuit views on the 1740 rebellion are taken from these two key documents.

intention of breaking into it. When another Yaqui refused to whip Muni at Frias's direction, the coyote had them both punished. Then it was discovered that the son of another coyote had actually lost the keys. But Frias offered no apologies for the false accusation nor compensation for the unwarranted punishment.

In the wake of Muni's bold example, other disgruntled Yaquis also sought out *Alcalde* Quiroz with similar complaints. As for Muni himself, although he had carefully avoided implicating the missionaries directly, his unprecedented initiative had marked him out as a troublemaker in Jesuit eyes and coyote eyes. Not long after his visit with Quiroz, coyote Ignacio Alipazaga, nicknamed derisively *El Barrigon* by Yaquis, ordered Muni's arrest on grounds of attempting to foment an uprising. The native *gobernador* of Huirivis, Bernabé Basoritemea, Muni's *compadre* and soon his closest ally, reiterated to Quiroz the growing conviction among many of his people that coyotes were the real agitators and troublemakers in their communities. Jesuits counteracted Bernabé by sending a large contingent of loyal Yaquis to see Quiroz. Led by Captain-General Gurrola and accompanied by Father Jose Roldan, these Yaquis declared that they all lived in peace and harmony in the mission, with nothing to complain about.

The next official to step into the fray fared no better; in fact, he actually caused a major crisis. In October, with Governor Huidobro still absent, Lt. Gov. Mena felt compelled to intervene. First, he sent word to Muni and Bernabé, who were on their way to see him at the provincial capital, to return home and wait for him there. Once he arrived at the Yaqui region, however, instead of taking testimony from all sides and attempt to mediate the growing discord with justice, as he had promised Muni and Bernabé, Mena acted with undue haste and allowed himself to be swayed by the eloquent *padres*. After Fathers Pedro Reinaldo, Diego González, Ignacio Duque, and Bartolomé Fentanes had plied him with rich foods, lavish gifts, and high praises, Mena ordered the arrest of Muni, Bernabé and other dissident Yaquis, as well as Quiroz by then the former *alcalde mayor*. When a group of *vecinos* tried to dissuade him of the notion that these Yaquis were fomenting an uprising, the lieutenant governor brushed them aside. In no way, however, did the missionaries and their newfound ally anticipate the swift and volatile reaction of the Yaqui people to the sudden arrests. In front of the community house-turned-jail at Potam, Muni's nephew and confidant, Luis Aquibuamea, led a noisy crowd of irate Yaquis, estimated at 2,000 and armed with bows and arrows, to demand the immediate release of their imprisoned brothers. Having only a small armed escort with him, the understandably intimidated Mena capitulated and released Muni and the others; the crowd then dispersed.

The Potam incident deeply embarrassed the lieutenant governor and

seriously compromised his authority in the eyes of all Indians in the province. In fact, his humiliation caused all white men, *vecinos* and Jesuits alike, to suffer loss of prestige and honor. Conversely, the aura surrounding the Yaquis' large and spontaneous demonstration greatly enhanced the self esteem and confidence of all Indians, at the same time bolstering Muni and Bernabé's reputation and popularity throughout the province. Perhaps to save face, Mena kept Quiroz prisoner and remitted him to Guadalajara for judgement, only to find himself soon relieved of office.

Among the first to inform Mexico of Mena's failed intervention in the Yaqui mission were those *vecinos* whose pleas he had so brusquely ignored. In November 1736, fifteen of them signed a collective letter to Viceroy Juan Antonio de Vizarron y Eguiarreta containing a critical account of Mena's mishandling of the Yaqui crisis, emphasizing his adamant refusal to take their testimony while falling easy prey to the Jesuits' sweet words and generosity. These *vecinos* also took the opportunity to bring up again the lingering issue of labor shortage. Because Jesuits exploited Yaqui labor to reap annual profits of two to three thousand *pesos* a year, they argued, Yaquis desired to be freed of Jesuit tutelage and pay tribute to the Crown instead. The Potam incident was especially lamentable because Mena had damaged the Crown's credibility just when Yaquis and other Indians were ready to become mature, tax-paying subjects.

If these *vecinos* were angling to make a persuasive argument for secularization of the missions in front of the "archbishop-viceroy", as Vizarron was known, they were sorely disappointed, for in his response to the *vecinos*, the viceroy skirted entirely the related issues of labor shortage and secularization, focusing instead on the demonstration itself. Pardoning all those Yaquis who had rebelled against Mena, Vizarron invited their leaders to write, or present, their grievances in person to him in Mexico. He also ordered the release of Quiroz. The judgement was clearly against Mena and, by extension, the Jesuits as well. Its impact was delayed, however, for the letter, dated in March 1737, did not arrive in Sinaloa until May 1738, over a year later. In the meantime, relationships between Jesuits and Yaquis deteriorated even further.

Lt. Governor Mena was not the only political casualty in the immediate aftermath of Potam. As if acknowledging their own difficulties in managing Yaqui mission affairs, Fathers Diego González and Ignacio Duque asked to be relieved of their posts. Unfortunately, their successor, Father Ignacio Maria Napoli, a transfer from Baja California, failed to heal the wounds as next resident father of Potam, Raum and Huirivis. In fact, during the next three years, many of Father Napoli's actions and policies intensified the hostility and mistrust already dividing the troubled mission. With increasingly

regularity, Muni and Bernabé defied the authority of the father and his Yaqui and coyote assistants. After a series of unpleasant confrontations, Muni and Bernabé were suddenly out of office as *gobernadores* of their respective *pueblos*. Father Napoli claimed they had resigned, but Bernabé informed the new lieutenant governor, Cayetano Fernandez de Peralta, that the *padre* had peremptorily ousted him and Muni. Whereupon Peralta dispatched a special emissary, the *vecino* Don Manuel Gaspar de Flores of Baroyeca to reinstate Muni and Bernabé. Despite the loyal Yaqui capitan-general Gurrola's protestations that Yaquis were happy with Father Napoli, the perceptive Don Manuel detected signs of widespread support for Muni and Bernabé. For example, he observed that at the mass said for the new *gobernador* of Raum -handpicked by Napoli, he noted- few men, and mostly women, attended. In this tense atmosphere, the cautious *vecino* decided to suspend his orders and instructed Muni and Bernabé instead to see Peralta personally in Sinaloa.

While an indecisive Peralta wavered about how to proceed next, in July 1738 Governor Huidobro finally returned from Baja California, where he had squabbled bitterly with the Jesuits. He proceeded immediately to the Yaqui mission to verify for himself the deteriorating situation there, having received numerous and conflicting reports. At Potam, Gurrola and the handpicked *gobernadores* of Raum, Huirivis and Potam delivered to him separate written complaints against Muni, Bernabé and seventeen others, charging them with insubordination and rebelliousness, that is, encouraging other Yaquis to follow their leadership instead of obeying the fathers. In addition, they accused Muni of plotting to make himself captain-general and Bernabé perpetual governor of Huirivis.

But when Huidobro interrogated the *gobernadores* on the spot, he heard oral testimonies that contradicted their written statements. The native magistrates revealed that they were actually in complete ignorance of the contents of their formal presentations, which Father Napoli had handed to them for delivery to the governor. It turned out that Napoli's coyote assistants had penned the indictments according to the father's instructions. Discovery of this deception did not appear to have embarrassed Father Napoli, who went before Huidobro himself to repeat with even great vehemence the same denunciations. Ever since these disloyal Yaquis went unpunished for taking up arms against Mena, he fumed, they had become increasingly insolent, losing all respect not only for the missionaries, but for all Spaniards as well. Moreover, Muni and Bernabé had appropriated all communal goods in their *pueblos* for themselves, leaving nothing for the *padres*. Many Yaquis were already worshipping Muni on their knees as if he were God, Napoli warned; he was convinced the Devil had possessed Muni. In closing his tirade, Father Napoli characterized Muni and Bernabé's irreverent behavior as *hombrearse*, presuming to act like Spanish adults. They called themselves "*Señor*

gobernador,” and “*Señor Muni*,” while parading around with an armed retinue complete with flags and military insignias, and otherwise dressing like Spaniards, with guns, swords and all, instead of the Indians’ traditional bows and arrows.

Never having been partial to Jesuits, Huidobro gave the Yaquis an open hearing as well. On July 22, before a large gathering of Indians in Potam *plaza*, Muni and Bernabé recited to the governor their, by then familiar, litany of outstanding grievances against Gurrola and the *padres*’ abusive coyote assistants. In addition, they expressed unhappiness over the excessive workloads the missionaries demanded of them, their wives and children, especially for labor related to the production and transportation of provisions and cattle for the California missions. Their communal ranches were impoverished because the fathers had just dispatched 500 to 600 heads to the peninsular and sold 200 heads each to Los Alamos and to Villa de Sinaloa for silver. Yet the Yaqui people did not see or enjoy the profits from the sale of their mission surpluses. The *padres* also expropriated the sweat of Yaqui labor when they presented lavish gifts to Lt. Gov. Mena in 1736. Finally, the Potam gathering vented resentment at the harsh corporal punishment they often suffered, frequently for little or no cause at all.

At the end of this emotion-packed public hearing, Governor Huidobro heightened the excitement by reading aloud Viceroy Vizarron’s letter of March 1737, which had conveniently arrived. The missive, which exonerated Yaquis for their armed confrontation with Mena and invited their leaders for a private audience in Mexico, left them feeling vindicated. In October, encouraged by Huidobro’s blessing, Muni and Bernabé set off for Mexico to see the viceroy; they would not return until late in 1740, when the open rebellion was in its final moments. The governor’s last act before departing the Yaqui mission was to hold new elections in Potam, Huirivis and Raum to replace the handpicked *gobernadores* which Father Napoli had installed.

If Huidobro’s actions went far to placate Yaqui dissidents, they had the opposite effect on the Jesuit missionaries, who seriously questioned the governor’s wisdom in publicizing Vizarron’s condemnation of Mena and in encouraging Muni and Bernabé to accept the viceroy’s invitation. Nor surprisingly, they interpreted Huidobro’s behavior as hostile to Jesuit interests and an incitement to rebellion. Throughout 1738 and 1739, they kept alerting local authorities to disturbances in the Yaqui, such as armed individuals in war paints arresting Indians loyal to the *padres* and threats made on the *padres*’ lives. To their despair and exasperation, Huidobro and his subordinates dismissed these notices as “false alarms” not worthy of attention. By this time, missionaries were inclined to call any act of insubordination a sure sign of impending revolt. They even began dismantling mission churches of valuable ornaments and packing them off to California missions for

safekeeping, acts which irate Yaquis added to their growing list of Jesuit abuses. During this entire period, the problem of labor shortages in the mines remained pending. When pressed for his cooperation, Father Napoli insisted that he could not spare any Yaquis to work for the *vecinos*, but Alcalde *Mayor* Jose Acedo y Bea of Ostimuri swore he saw large numbers of Yaquis toiling for the missionaries in various capacities.

While old problems and tensions remained unresolved, new ones arose during Muni and Bernabé's long absence preceding the uprising that broke in early 1740. For months, beginning in late 1739, alternating droughts and floods in the Valle del Yaqui caused the destruction of crops and cattle, leading to severe food shortages and widespread hunger. A totally unfamiliar sight surfaced in this area, that of hungry Yaquis wandering about the sierra foraging for edible materials. Soon, desperate Indians began raiding mission granaries and nearby Spanish *haciendas* for food. The resident fathers' handling of the famine departed notably from the tradition that their predecessors had established. Seldom, if ever, under Jesuit rule did Yaquis have to resort to the ancient practice of gathering wild foods or to acts of banditry for survival, for the mission system had always managed to take care of the hungry masses from the stored surpluses in the *pueblos*. When other hungry Indians in the flood-damaged area approached the prosperous Yaqui mission for succor, they were uncharacteristically turned away empty handed as well. In 1739, the *padres* announced that they were reserving the bulk of the surplus provisions for the California missions; some Yaquis could only interpret such an insensitive decision as punishment for their recent challenge to Jesuit power⁶. Even the Jesuits' faithful coyote assistant Juan Frias, an eye-witness to the floods which had destroyed "all the cattle and crops," acknowledged that the motive for the uprising in early 1740 was because Father Fentanes punished those Yaquis who resorted to plundering the storehouses for food, whereupon "they became incensed and threw him out of the mission"⁷.

By February 1740, widespread acts of banditry led directly to the beginnings of a massive, but uncoordinated, often leaderless, uprising. Large numbers of Mayos had joined forces with their Yaqui neighbors, plundering and raiding to such alarming proportions that *vecinos* in more isolated

⁶ These observations on how Napoli and other fathers handled the food crisis was made by Alcalde Acedo y Bea, whose report is contained in the report of Lic. Joseph Mexia de la Cerda y Vargas, March 18, 1744, (Pastells 33:215-355).

⁷ Juan Frias's testimony taken by Huidobro, in Fuenclara 1744, (Pastells 32: 391-92). Fuenclara 1744 contains several summaries of the significant events from 1735 to the outbreak of rebellion in 1740. One of the best is *Auditor de Guerra* Marquez de Altamira's report (cited earlier), (Pastells 32: 516-63). The *auditor* concurs that the rebellion began with the raids and the missionaries' reaction.

locations began to abandon their mines and homes for more secure, large towns and *haciendas*. By April, the Yaqui River was “all drums and arrows”; by the end of May, groups of Fuertenos, Guaymenos and other Pima Bajo groups had also risen up. From late May to the rebels’ surrender in mid-October, except for the handful of Spanish prisoners kept in the Yaqui missions, the rebels had cleared Ostimuri of all white people, *vecinos* and missionaries alike. Most of them fled to Alamos in Sinaloa and other safer towns farther south. With all mining operations in the district at a standstill and all communications between Sonora and Sinaloa effectively cut off, the rebels enjoyed *de facto* control of the Yaqui-Mayo territory. At its height, the rebellion covered an area over 100 leagues in extension from north to south. Huidobro estimated the combined rebel strength at 12,000 to 14,000, organized into attack units of as large as 300 to 400. Jesuits contested these figures, somewhat exaggerated, pointing out that they were based on the assumption that all the Indians of the northwest had taken up arms, which was not quite the case. Nor did it seem to be the case that the rebels were intending on waging an all-out *guerra de casta*, or race war, as some *vecinos* had feared. Instead, they aimed their violence not so much at annihilating persons as on Spanish property, sacking, burning, and pillaging the *vecinos*’ homes, storehouses, mines and chapels. They took slightly over 100 prisoners, mainly women and children, but killed surprisingly few men. Only in one case of a rebel assault were there as many as five Spanish casualties reported⁸. Apart from raiding mission granaries, rebels generally spared other mission properties, such as churches. Most of the hostilities occurred outside mission *pueblos*; not a single Jesuit was killed by rebels, although one elderly missionary died from the terror and ordeal of fleeing from the Mayo. Rebels appeared to have no clear-cut leadership, no overall coordination under one command, or a grand strategy. A number of self-proclaimed rebel chieftains, such as the Yaqui Juan Calixto, had shortlived tenures. Accounting of Yaqui casualties has been difficult and elusive, but it was nowhere near the thousands that some historians have reported⁹.

⁸ The report on these five casualties was contained in *vecino* testimonies gathered by Huidobro’s successor, Agustin de Vildosola, and submitted to the viceroy, Alamos, February 13, 1743, (Pastells 34: 385-438).

⁹ Decorme, p. 339, citing no source, claims casualties of 2,000 and 3,000 in the battles of Tambor and Otanchui. Navarro Garcia (1966: 101) has determined that not only are these figures not possible, but that the two battles themselves were mythical. Navarro Garcia discusses some of the myths and legends that have arisen about the 1740 rebellion and the modern accounts that have perpetuated these myths.

Race war or not, these large roving bands of rebels instilled tremendous fear in *vecinos* and in Governor Huidobro. While waiting for the slow arrival of much needed reinforcement from Nueva Vizcaya and northern presidios, he merely withdrew to the fortified town of Los Alamos, followed by most of the terrified *vecinos* and missionaries who resented his cowardice and total lack of leadership.

Meanwhile, in mid-1739, shortly before the actual outbreak of violence in the Yaqui valley, Muni and Bernabé were being received by the new viceroy in faraway Mexico City. The petition they presented is one of the few original Yaqui documents in existence¹⁰. It was widely circulated in high official circles in Mexico City and Madrid, and among the Jesuit hierarchy as well. Contrary to the Jesuits' worst fears, this statement fell short of a passionate plea for secularization. On the other hand, it was definitely critical of certain fathers and, more importantly, of certain longstanding Jesuit practices that were rooted in the daily interactions between missionaries and natives. Muni and Bernabé urged the removal of the insensitive, highhanded Fathers Napoli and González, as well as their handpicked native officials and coyote outsiders. They asked for compensation from Lt. Gov. Mena for the "damages" he had caused them with the unwarranted arrests in Potam. Muni demanded the restitution of his land, which he claimed Father Napoli had taken from him in punishment. But the two Yaquis also asked for an additional missionary to tend to the *pueblos* of Huirivis, Raum, Potam and Belem, which had lost their resident *padre*.

If these demands addressed immediate concerns which could be dealt with fairly readily, the next section of the petition must have created serious consternation for the Jesuits. Muni and Bernabé asked the viceroy to allow their people to carry their traditional weapons of bows and arrows; that they not be forced to work in the mission without pay; that the fathers not take away their land and convert it to other uses; that they be allowed to elect their own officials without Jesuit interference; that the Jesuit provincial protect the Indians from excessive work loads in the *pueblos*, especially during their *fiestas* and for transporting provisions to California; that they be allowed to sell some of their excess produce to whomever they pleased; and that the *padres* not stop them from working in the mines. Finally, they requested to have their own "*Protector de Indios*". Most of these demands struck at the

¹⁰ Muni and Bernabé's petition to the viceroy, July 1739, in Fuenclara 1744, (Pastells 32: 354-56). Although Archbishop-Viceroy Vizarron had invited the Yaquis, he soon died and it was his successor, Viceroy Duque de la Conquista, who actually received Muni and Bernabé; the new viceroy was none too pleased that he had to do so, and faulted Governor Huidobro for encouraging the Yaquis to accept the invitation issued by his predecessor.

very foundation of absolute Jesuit power in the mission and over Yaqui interaction with the outside world. Yet nowhere in this lengthy petition did Muni and Bernabé actually asked to close the mission, to pay tribute, or to replace the Jesuit missionaries with secular priests. Rather, it appeared, they argued for a relaxation of Jesuit rule, one less autocratic and paternalistic, and one that permitted Yaquis greater personal freedom and more control over their labor and their production.

But such a compromise, it appeared, was anathema to Jesuit thinking. For despite the fact that Muni and Bernabé were nowhere near the site of the uprising when it broke in early 1740, and that they rushed back to their homeland in late 1740 to help pacify the rebels, Jesuits singled them out as the real instigators of the rebellion, implying that their well articulated ideas and independent worldview, evident at Potam as early as 1735, had stirred up the rebel masses. They gave great credence to the testimony of rebel chieftain Calixto, who claimed he rebelled because of the rumored death of Muni and Bernabé.

When news of the rebellion reached them, Muni and Bernabé were on their way home. By then, two rebel groups which had reached the Pimeria Alta had suffered two defeats at the hands of militia captain Agustín de Vildosola, in the town of Tecoripa. These defeats marked the turning point and produced a much-needed hero in Vildosola around whom the demoralized *vecinos* and missionaries could rally. Together with crucial Spanish wins in the south in late August by late arriving reinforcements, and with the return of Bernabé that same month, Spanish victory appeared close at hand. On September 7, Huidobro dispatched Bernabé to the Yaqui, where rebel chiefs had already extended peace feelers. On October 13, Bernabé returned to Alamos with a large contingent of prominent rebels, bringing in tow 103 Spanish prisoners. For days afterwards, additional waves of Yaquis came to surrender.

When Huidobro finally emerged from his sanctuary in November, he merely consolidated the peace that had begun with Yaqui capitulation, which was actually secured by the timely arrival and intervention of Bernabé and later, Muni. In December and January, accompanied once again by the two Yaqui leaders, he toured the mission *pueblos* and took the census, confiscated and burned weapons, and returned stolen property and cattle. He noted that many Yaquis had already gone to the mines of Sonora and Nueva Vizcaya, while others were once again plying the supply boats to California, or tending to their own fields and cattle. In short, most Yaquis had resumed their normal activities and way of life. Following instructions Muni carried back from the viceroy, Huidobro installed him as captain-general of the Yaqui and Bernabé as *alférez*, both with permission to bear arms. Huidobro himself did not fare

as well. Against many charges of cowardice and incompetence lodged against him by *vecinos* and missionaries, he was summoned to Mexico City to answer them. The heralded Captain Vildosola was named interim governor, while entirely new sets of Jesuits arrived to take up posts in the Yaqui and Mayo missions.

So by the end of 1740 violence quickly subsided, but not Jesuit uneasiness over the movement towards secularization, embodied in the presence of Muni and Bernabé. Thus they applauded Vildosola's arrest of Muni and Bernabé and 43 of their close associates, including Calixto, in June 1741, and strongly endorsed his bold decision to execute Muni and Bernabé¹¹. But when Vildosola returned to the Yaqui in mid-1742 to exhort the Yaquis to be loyal to the Crown and to work for the Spanish mines and *haciendas*, Jesuits denounced him as vehemently as they had his predecessor, Huidobro. But they probably knew by then that it was just a matter of time before the inexorable move towards secularization would seal their fate.

EXPULSION AND SECULARIZATION

The 1740 Yaqui rebellion consisted of two distinct parts. First, Muni and Bernabé launched a protest movement against Jesuit rule, specifically against certain excessively autocratic *padres* and their paternalistic practices. Their complaints fell short of supporting *vecino* arguments for outright secularization, while their actions cannot be said to have led directly to the armed uprising itself. The second part of the rebellion, which was directly precipitated by floods and famine aggravated by Jesuit insensitivity to their plight, certainly underscored the growing alienation between Jesuits and Yaquis.

After rebel surrender, Muni and Bernabé unsuccessfully tried to assert an independent Yaqui leadership in the mission. Nevertheless, many Yaquis did not return to the fields, but opted increasingly for the mines. In this

¹¹ In gathering evidence against Huidobro, Muni and Bernabé, Vildosola questioned several groups of witnesses over a period of time. In July 1741, he grilled a number of Yaqui *principales* for damaging information, finding one who testified that "Spaniards" had advised Muni to ask for secular priests and to pay tribute, but this Yaqui could not identify the Spaniards who gave such advice. Other Yaqui witnesses were unsure of what caused the rebellion, the raids, or Muni's instructions to rebel, and with whom Muni might have left such instructions. Vildosola to viceroy, Torin, July 13, 1741, Pastells 30: 396-406. For another set of testimonies Vildosola gathered in the Yaqui, among Indians, mestizos, coyotes and Spaniards (67 individuals), see Vildosola to viceroy, Buenavista, 22 June 1741, in Fuenclara 1744, (Pastells 32: 414-36).

sparsely populated, labor scare and rapidly developing frontier, Yaquis voluntarily accommodated to the growing needs of the expanding Spanish economy. In doing so, they continued to signal a desire for greater independence from the Jesuits.

Jesuits meanwhile did everything they could to discredit the Spanish mining towns and deter the migration of Yaqui and other mission Indians to Spanish society. Their favorite argument went like this: Once Indians have “tasted a life of license” in the mines, they were loathe to return to their *pueblos*, and if they did, “they were the Devil’s own leaven, for they show the others the vices they have learned and stimulate them to go and do likewise.” [“Los que una vez prueban la vida licencioso en tales parajes, rara vez vuelven a sus *pueblos* y aun entonces son ellos la levadura del Demonio pues enseñando a otros las maldades que aprendieron, les son de incentivo para que las vayan a probar otros muchos.”] (Nentuig 1951: 55-56; see also Och 1965: 144-45).

Adding to Jesuit discomfort, secular scrutiny of mission affairs was growing, in the persons of special investigators. In 1747, Jose Antonio Rodriguez Gallardo arrived as “Investigating Judge and Inspector of Presidios of Sonora and Ostimuri.” [Juez Investigador y Inspector de Presidios de Sonora y Ostimuri]. After more than a year of travels in the region, he recommended the establishment of more permanent Spanish towns, as well as the settlement of Spaniards and castas of “good moral character” in the mission *pueblos*, where they would be granted a parcel of land and perhaps even serve as magistrates and overseers. While he had a generally low opinion of frontier Indians, he singled out Yaquis as exceptional, despite their recent uprising, which, interestingly, he described as “*guerras de comunidad*.” Yaquis and Mayos, he noted, were “*mas ladinos que muchos indios de los suburbios o varios [sic por barrios] de Mexico ... porque sirviendo en las minas se hazen al trato y lengua de los espanoles, y los que no la hablan por lo menos la entienden...*” (Rodriguez Gallardo 1749-50, in Ocaranza I: 157, 166). Despite these recommendations, however, Rodriguez Gallardo did not come out explicitly for secularization of the missions.

Naval officer Fernando Sanchez Salvador (N/d), who made his inspection immediately after Rodriguez Gallardo, did propose outright “mexicanizacion” of the missions up to and including the Yaqui. He noted that these missions were ready to pay tribute, although only those of Culiacan were actually assessed. In his proposal to reorganize missions according to the “*estilo y la politica mexicanos*”¹², he made no room for missionaries. Echoing Gallardo,

¹² The use of the term “mexicanizacion” and “mexicanos” in this report refers, of course, to the *altiplano central* of New Spain.



he also called special attention to the Yaquis, many of whom, he noted, spoke Spanish “*por la intensidad del comercio y el trato que tienen con los españoles*”. In his opinion, Yaquis should be encouraged to work in the mines for the “*bien común*”. This conclusion was reiterated years later in 1765 by none other than Bishop Pedro Tamaron y Romeral of Nueva Vizcaya, in whose jurisdiction many of the mines were located. (Sanchez Salvador [n/d]; Tamaron y Romeral 1937: 247).

Not to be outwitted by these secular inspectors, Jesuits also undertook their own in-depth examination, led by Father Ignacio Lizasoain, who visited the Mayo and Yaqui missions several times between 1751 and 1757. In his report, he noted that some 3,000 Yaquis had gone to the mines, confirming what the other inspectors had already observed. Father Lizasoain also remarked on another recent development in the Yaqui mission. Shortly after 1740, Seri and Pima Bajo marauders, occasionally joined by Pimas Altos, Suaquis and others, increasingly threatened the security of the mission frontier in the northwest. Although Yaquis had traditionally volunteered for, or been pressed into, military service for the colonial state, for the first time they had to assume the defense of their own mission against “*bárbaros*.” Gradually, during the following two decades, the area of defense expanded to include a wider region bounded by the Apache frontier to the north and the Fuerte River to the south. Father Lizasoain claimed that over one hundred Yaquis had been killed by various rebel attacks on their *pueblos*. The *presidio* of Buenavista changed from its original and primary purpose of policing the Yaqui *pueblos* to combating Pima and Seri rebels. But since the *presidio* had only 50 regular soldiers, Yaquis themselves made up the bulk of the defense and expeditionary forces. The mission also provided most of the food and other necessities for the military campaigns.

This new state of military emergency reinforced the importance of the captain-general, a position which came to prominence around 1735 leading up into the 1740 rebellion. It is not clear when this office was first created in the Yaqui mission, but it had always been an integral part of the Sonoran missions, whose stance of frontier defense necessitated the establishment of such a position from their inception. Yet Jesuit missionaries never felt comfortable with the native captain-general, authorized to bear arms, and thus in a good position to acquire and accrue enormous power and prestige, perhaps enough to rival that of the resident fathers. Hence the *padres* tried to handpick and impose pliable natives to the position, such as the much despised Gurrola, Muni and Bernabé’s nemesis; by the same token, they protested the elevation of Muni to the same position after the rebellion. Father Juan Nentuig reflected his colleagues’ uneasiness in his conviction that the office of the captain-general:

no es [para] bien de la religion porque por bueno que sea el indio, antes que llegue a ser estimado y ensalzado, con qualquier preminencia que se le de, de humilde se hace soberbio; de deligente, flojo y dejado, porque le parece que ya no hay mas a que aspirer; de obediente y docil, terco y porfiado en su capricho; y lo peor es que de buen cristiano, con el cargo honroso suelen hacerse malos. (Lizasoain [n/d]).

Compounding Jesuit misgivings was the fact that the native captain-general served under local military authorities, which gave their hated adversaries another excuse to interfere in mission affairs. Yet they knew they had few alternatives when faced with these outside threats but to acquiesce to these unwelcome changes. Unable to regain their powerful influence vis-à-vis either Indians or civil authorities, Jesuits were dealt their *coup de grace* when the Bourbon Crown, advised by *Visitador-General* Jose de Galvez, decreed their wholesale expulsion from the American colonies in 1767, as one of the first steps towards overhauling the colonial system.

For their part, Yaquis negotiated the changes in their social and political environment with less stress and greater advantage to themselves than the Jesuits were capable of. By cooperating with mission defense and, most importantly, by meeting the demands for labor from the local Spanish mining economy, they forestalled the imposition of more drastic reforms suggested by some of the post-1740 inspectors, such as tribute collection or the settlement of Spanish colonists in their *pueblos*. Consequently, they were able to hold on to their land, their communities and essentially, their autonomy into the nineteenth century.

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