While Middle American social formations studied by anthropologists are related historically to the uneven development of a capitalist world system, the precise nature of such linkages remains problematic. In this article, class formation and social reproduction are the basis for a reinterpretation of an earlier division of Latin America into regions based on pre-existing social relations and the ability of the Spanish conquerors to exploit native labor [1]. The so-called 'dependency' debates have shown the importance of considering how these modes of production were tied to capitalist development [2]. Rather than continuing the debate strictly in terms of the appropriate theoretical unit, i.e., the feudal or capitalist nature of the mode of production, I will address the problem of how regional differences in land–labor relations developed. These differences in exploitation are important when one considers the response of regionally distinct class structures to changes in the larger capitalist system.

Service's initial discussion of the types — Indo-American, Mestizo-American, and Euro-American [3] — provides a useful starting point but needs a critical and dialectical examination of how these types are tied to the surplus extractions of a capitalist world economy. In confronting pre-conquest class structures, the Spanish were faced with the problems of how to obtain an exploitable surplus in European goods, and how to provide a labor supply for those sectors of the colonial society producing this wealth — in short, both capital and demographic reproduction [4]. My argument is that regions met these problems differently depending upon how the region was tied into the merchant capitalist system and the labor policies of the colonial state. Using colonial New Spain as an example, I explore the roles of social class and reproduction in the development of regional differences. In southern New Spain, particularly the Yucatan, low commercialization and labor-extensive agriculture allowed the continued use of the encomienda and the repartimiento long after they had vanished from the rest of the colony. In southwestern New Spain, particularly in Oaxaca and Chiapas, highly commercial exploitation of particular crops under existing class relations was intensified by the repartimiento and Indian congregations served as 'labor reserves.' In northern and central Mexico, more commercialized haciendas and mines created a demand for labor and led to new class relations [5]. I discuss each variety of labor control and policy — the encomienda in the Yucatan, the repartimiento in Oaxaca, and the hacienda in the Bajio — first, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century formation of these institutions, and then again during the nineteenth century when the regional differences become important in the formation of the Mexican nation-state.

Regional differences in colonial institutions had existed since the conquest but, by the late sixteenth century, the land-labor institu-
tions and class structures had developed which would set the long-term pattern of social and economic relations. The uneven development of a 'world system' of merchant capital did not lead to a uniformity in land-labor institutions or class structures in New Spain. Rather, once established, merchant capital intensified and reinforced regional differences in these institutions. While there may be formal similarities, the specific forms of 'coerced cash-crop labor' represent important differences in the nature of surplus extraction [6]. These variations become evident in later shifts of the capitalist system, but my initial concern is with the development of New World class formations and land-labor systems. It is in the regional differences in response to a crisis in reproduction that the examination of the class structure begins.

Regional differences in class structure are based upon the differences in land holding and labor supply. Local responses to the decline in labor supply differed depending on how the region was tied into the demands of the Spanish state. Some regions, particularly the mining industries of northern Mexico and the Bajío, produced silver which was in constant demand. In these regions, there was also a demand for agricultural products; both mines and nearby haciendas developed incipient capitalist relations to meet their labor supply demands [7]. In other regions, particularly the southern highlands, the commercially exploitable products were obtained through various forms of the repartimiento and the Indian labor force was gathered into reducciones which formed the basis of closed-corporate communities [8]. In still other regions, the encomienda remained a viable form of exploiting labor, only slowly giving way to other forms of service tenure [9].

Three regional case studies - the encomienda in the Yucatan, the repartimiento in Oaxaca, and the northern Mexican hacienda - will be presented to draw out the contrasts of colonial class structure and social reproduction. Though in fact, all of these practices overlap, the institutions have different histories and meanings in each region. The hacienda, for example, occurs in all three regions, but its traditional image must undergo considerable revision. In Oaxaca, the haciendas were smaller, used repartimiento labor longer, and produced for limited markets [10]. In the northern mining districts and nearby urban centers, haciendas were commercially viable enterprises with a labor force secured through a combination of debt peonage and wage-labor. In the Yucatan, the haciendas developed in association with the encomienda. The picture of the hacienda as a large landed estate, 'self-sufficient,' and producing for a limited market is an ideal which has long obscured the variations in this institution. Important differences existed in the hacienda and its position in the regional colonial economy; differences in land-labor relations which were expressed in regional class structure; differences which would become important in the nineteenth century as New Spain (geographically much larger than present-day Mexico - including both parts of the current United States and Central America) gained political independence and attempted to form a nation-state.

The role of the "crisis of the seventeenth century" in the development of these regional differences in land-labor relations has been the subject of much debate [11]. Clearly, this was a major period in the realignment of capitalism in Europe; the power of Spain and Portugal was broken, and new mercantile powers - the Dutch, the English, and the French - emerged. Understanding regional differences in the hacienda during this period is important for, as Morner has noted, the self-sufficiency of the hacienda was relative to the degree of commercialization; many haciendas simply failed when market demand declined [12]. Others appear to have contracted production to meet the demands of the more limited colonial market. And yet all continued in one