

Preface

This study was originally designed as a sequel to my earlier work on nineteenth-century Mexican liberalism, which would trace the experience of liberalism in the era of political and social upheaval after 1910. I had thought to focus, as I did earlier, on the ideas of key individuals, in this case intellectuals of the revolutionary era whose ideas when placed in broader context epitomized the changes brought about by the Revolution. As I proceeded, I realized that my interests moved more naturally toward continuity rather than change (or continuity within change), and I hit upon Emilio Rabasa, a man of the old regime caught up in the maelstrom of revolution. And yet Rabasa was not simply a figure that the changes of history passed by. He and to some extent his ideas survived; he was a man who by choosing exile continued to write and think critically about Mexico, its problems, its past and future. Ultimately returning to his country, Rabasa accepted the new order and adapted himself to its exigencies with only a modest change in his ideas. My earlier studies of liberalism focused on José María Luis Mora in the early nineteenth century and on Justo Sierra in the later period. However, in both cases my central concern was to probe a set of ideas rather than the thought (or the lives) of the individuals themselves. However, as the present study progressed, it became increasingly biographical, in part because the man I had chosen, besides representing intellectual continuity, was in himself of great interest, a man whose career, ideas, and personality were filled with enigma and even contradiction. Of course, I was also drawn to biography by the discovery of new evidence that uncovered a figure of great public importance whom we knew only superficially. The result is that except for Chapter 7, devoted to Emilio Rabasa's later juridical thought and action, the chapters of this book basically follow the stages of his life and multiple careers, intertwined with analysis of his ideas.