

DON MIGUEL HIDALGO Y COSTILLA

Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla - Mestizo "Father of Mexican Independence"; secular parish priest, scholar & fighter for "*Tierra y Libertad*" ("Land & Liberty") the abolition of slavery and the oppression of the Natives, under the banner of "Our Very Holy Mother of Guadalupe" (*image, right*). As a university student Hidalgo was given the nickname "*El Zorro*" (The Fox), which stuck with him his entire life. He was captured, tried and executed by the Spanish authorities in 1811. Independence from Spain was achieved in 1821.



La Zambra del Zorro depicts Padre Felipé as the personal link between the historical *El Zorro* (Hidalgo) and the fictional *El Zorro* (Diego) – while the cause remains the same.

From *The Life and Times of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla* by Arthur Howard Noll and A. Philip McMahon, originally published in 1910, we read:

"We are told that he [Hidalgo] studies philosophy and theology at Valladolid, and that he excelled by reason of his talent, and received from his college companions the nickname of "*el Zorro*" (the Fox), implying superior sagacity and shrewdness rather than low cunning." -- pgs. 6-7.

"In 1805 he made a journey to the City of Mexico... We have seen that he had been in the city on two previous occasions for the purpose of receiving his degrees from the University. That was more than thirty years before.... The journey... was usually made with companions for mutual protection, for most of the roads were infested by robbers. But we must imagine Don Miguel, "*el Zorro*" watchful of all that was going on about him, quick to receive impressions from what he saw, and closely observant of everything that might aid him in his large plans for the betterment of his people." -- pg. 35.

"He was of few words in the ordinary affairs of life, but animated when he was engaged in argument which he carried on in academic style. His dress was that of the average secular clergy of the



provinces. He wore a cloak of black wollen, knee breeches, waistcoat and jacket of a kind of goods which comes from India and is called "*rompacoche*," a round hat, and he carried with him a long cane. His college nickname of *El Zorro* clung to him throughout his life, and is said to have faithfully characterized him." -- pgs. 124-5.

My "theory" is that Johnston McCulley had access to this biography of Hidalgo and took inspiration and the name "*El Zorro*" from it.



McCulley's first Zorro novel, *The Curse of Capistrano*, was published in 1919, only nine years after the Hidalgo biography.

Here are a few, of so many, artists' renderings of Hidalgo, plus a photo of his *Viva...Guadalupe* banner, preserved for posterity in Mexico City.



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For more information:

◆ <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/adp/archives/documents/hidalgo.html>

◆ *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531-1813* by Jacques Lafaye (Benjamin Keen, trans.), 1976 © The University of Chicago.