POPULAR CONSERVATISM IN MEXICO:
RELIGION, LAND, AND POPULAR POLITICS IN NAYARIT AND QUERÉTARO, 1750–1873

By

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ABSTRACT

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In the mid nineteenth century, Liberal and Conservative forces fought a series of wars—later called the Reform—to determine the place the Roman Catholic Church would occupy in Mexican society. Liberal state builders, for their part, sought to curtail clerical power and influence in the young, politically unstable country. From 1855 to 1857, Liberal politicians enacted a series of anticlerical decrees designed to forcibly sell off ecclesiastical property and separate Church and state. Conservative rebellions erupted in response. This study examines the two largest and least understood Conservative uprisings in this period in an attempt to explain why thousands of men and women gave their lives in support of a Church many historians have reviled as elitist and oppressive. Essentially, these rebellions demonstrate two modes of popular Conservatism: a pragmatic and a clerical mode.

The first rebellion took place in northwestern Jalisco along the western foothills of the Sierra del Nayarit. From 1855 to 1873, Manuel Lozada and thousands of supporters gradually pushed back Liberal forces from Nayarit and there constructed a Conservative quasi-state. In this pragmatic mode of popular Conservatism, rebels and the Church represented two more or less distinct entities that negotiated to reach a mutually acceptable compromise. After decades of conflicts with priests over property that belonged to local confraternities, or lay brotherhoods, parishioners rebelled in the mid 1850s and allied with Lozada, who promised to restore their lands. Meanwhile, faced with a radical Liberal government in power in Mexico City and an

expanding insurrection in its own diocese, the Guadalajara See compromised with rebels. Lozada sought and received a number of important concessions for his followers, including restored communal lands, resident clergy for the remote rural areas under his control, and a *de facto* parish based in his hometown.

The second rebellion took place in Querétaro, but had a much broader national impact. Invaluable during the first war from 1858 to 1861, Tomás Mejía and his troops from the Sierra Gorda rose even further to become the Conservative point men during the Second Empire from 1862 to 1867. Whereas rebels in Nayarit negotiated *with* the Church, in Querétaro the Church's alliance with militant Conservatism was an internal affair. Throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, priests had developed close ties with sierra communities by lending money, erecting schools, and serving in politics. Local caciques, in turn, supported the priesthood with their own family members, sending men and women to join the clergy across urban and rural Querétaro. Rebels were fighting for their families as much as the institutional Church. And unlike in Nayarit, clergy in the Sierra Gorda explicitly supported rebellion. As a result, Mejía's rebellion left the Sierra and entered the national sphere. Fighters were not simply defending local religious practice, but rather the legal and moral position of the institutional Church in Mexican society.

Drawing on a wide variety of archival sources—ecclesiastical as well as civil—this study finds that the rural men and women who supported mid-nineteenth-century Conservatism did so for the structure and protection that the Church provided in their communities. Popular Conservatism in these regions reflected rural parishioners' desires to maintain this structure, and more broadly to maintain a Catholic order.

To Sarah

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Gobierno
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Archivo Histórico de la Basilica de Zapopan ..... AHBZ
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Archivo de Instrumentos Públicos del Estado de Jalisco ..... AIPEJ
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Mexico City

Archivo General de la Nación ..... AGN
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Archivo Histórico de la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación en Querétaro .....AHSCJNQ

Archivo Municipal de Cadereyta de Montes .....AMCM
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Archivo de la Parroquia de San Pedro y San Pablo de Cadereyta .....SPSPC
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Archivo Municipal de Tepic .....AMT
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Archivo Municipal de Xalisco ..... AMX
Registro Civil

United States

Family History Center, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints .....FHC

Nettie Lee Benson Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, Austin, Texas .....NLB
Edmund Joy Collection

William Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan .....WCL
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INTRODUCTION

"Why are you interested in Manuel Lozada?" asked the priest sitting across from me in a small café in Tepic in late summer 2009. His tone was suspicious. Realizing that my response could mean the difference between gaining access to the diocesan archive and forever being pushed off, I chose my words carefully. I explained that, while Lozada long had the lurid reputation as a "bandit," I thought his relationship with the Church had yet to be explored. I continued to describe my prior conversations with other scholars who had examined Lozada's mid-century rebellion. Few had taken the uprising's religious nature seriously. One historian had never visited a church archive on principle, as he perceived the institution to be oppressive and utterly untrustworthy. But I was different, I tried to emphasize. I wanted to see how the nineteenth-century clergy viewed Lozada. The priest, visibly more open, began to speak. "All the problems with Mexico today," he explained, "began with the Reform."[1]

In the mid nineteenth century, Liberal and Conservative forces went to war—later called the Reform—to determine the place the Roman Catholic Church would occupy in Mexican society. Liberal state builders, for their part, sought to curtail clerical power and influence in the young, politically unstable country. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had long stood in their way. Ever since independence in 1821, Church leaders fought to maintain their right to appoint members of the lower clergy and their right to special tribunals. Moreover, they fought to preserve the Church's vast property and wealth. Prior to the U.S.-Mexico War from 1846 to 1848, the civil government's conflict with the Church was largely secondary to its other considerations, such as

[1] Pedro Guzmán Delgado, conversation with the author, August 2009.

the nature of the nascent state. Successive governments alternated between federalism and centralism. But the devastating military loss to the United States polarized the country around the problem of the Church. Not only did the ecclesiastical hierarchy offer little financial aid to the Mexican military as U.S. troops closed in, they funded a barracks rebellion to oust a Liberal president during the course of the war. When Mexico subsequently lost half its national territory to the United States, a new group of radical Liberals took aim squarely at the Church. From 1855 to 1857, Liberal politicians enacted a series of anticlerical decrees, forcing the clergy into secular courts in civil cases, ending government recognition of monastic vows, and disamortizing Church property.

Conservatives fought against this divorce of Church and State. For them, the Catholic Church had been the pillar of order since the foundation of the colony. While Liberals viewed the Church as an obstacle to political and economic development, Conservatives feared that uprooting the Church would only lead to further instability and warfare. Mexico needed a strong central state, propped up by a strong national Church. Beginning in late 1855 and early 1856, a series of Conservative rebellions erupted in Tepic, Querétaro, and Puebla. By late 1857, Conservative forces launched a successful coup against the Liberal state. They subsequently revoked the anticlerical decrees and led the country until their military defeat in 1861. Opportunity arose again in 1862 when France, under Napoleon III, sent troops to Mexico in an attempt to expand French dominion into the Western Hemisphere. Conservatives allied with the implant imperial regime until Liberals finally retook power and executed key Conservative leaders in 1867.

This study examines the two largest, most enduring, and least understood Conservative uprisings in this period. The first took place in northwestern Jalisco, specifically the region that stretched along the western foothills of the Sierra del Nayarit. In that rebellion, Manuel Lozada and thousands of supporters gradually beat back Liberal forces from Nayarit from 1855 to 1861, then constructed a Conservative state in the region during the relative peace of the Second Empire. This state centered on the Nayarit frontier and satisfied his supporters' religious and agrarian demands. Through a combination of his shrewd diplomacy and the region's distance from the Mexican capital, Lozada negotiated with the victorious Liberal president Benito Juárez in 1867 and successfully maintained power until the latter's death. Lozada's twenty-year rebellion ended when Juárez's less diplomatic successor sent troops to the region in early 1873. After Lozada's forces were routed outside Guadalajara, the rebel leader was captured and executed later that year.

The second rebellion under study here took place in Querétaro. Although its time span was brief by comparison—1855 to 1867—it had a much broader national impact. Invaluable during the first war from 1858 to 1861, Tomás Mejía and his troops rose even further to become the Conservative point men during the Second Empire. During much of that war, Mejía's battalion was the only substantial non-French unit operating in the countryside. His forces came from the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro, a Conservative bastion during the mid-century wars and in the decades afterward, as well. Mejía's fame and popularity were so widespread, in fact, that Juárez had him executed alongside another Conservative general, Miguel Miramón, and the European emperor Maximilian in a symbolic gesture after Conservatives' defeat in 1867.

Specifically, this study attempts to answer one fundamental question: why did thousands of men and women give their lives in support of the Conservative cause? The present work is one of the first attempts to answer this question. Most scholars of popular politics in Mexico have instead focused on rural support for Liberalism in an attempt to understand post-Reform state formation. After a decade of civil war, a radical Liberal regime won the privilege of constructing that state in the late nineteenth century. How had peasants, too, shaped the Mexican state? As Florencia Mallon responded, "we need finally to admit that most of what was creative or new in the 1855–1867 period—under Liberal regimes as well as the empire—was put there in response to peasant pressure and contestation."[2] Historians such as Mallon, along with Guy Thomson, Peter Guardino, and Michael Ducey, viewed the first half of the nineteenth century as a "laboratory of liberal reform" whereby peasants shed the institutions and restrictions of the *antiguo régimen* and instead sought various freedoms in dialectic with a national Liberal program.[3]

Steeped in a materialist distillation of subaltern studies, political historians have largely ignored the possibility of a strong popular support for Conservatism.[4] On one hand, this neglect rests on a teleological bias: as they apparently left no mark on the victorious Liberal state, Conservative

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[2] Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 174.

[3] Brading originally used the phrase, "laboratory of liberal reform," to describe the Bourbon era in New Spain; Brading, *Church and State*, 165. *Cf.* Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*; Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State*; and Ducey, *A Nation of Villages*.

[4] As Thomson points out, earlier political historians made a similar argument about Liberalism, namely, that it had little popular support; Thomson, "Popular Aspects of Liberalism," 265–266. There are exceptions, of course: Mallon and Thomson both briefly deal with Conservative forces in the Puebla highlands; Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 23–62; and Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, 68–71. Thomson expands on this study in a subsequent book chapter, in which he discusses loyalty to priests and the significance of confraternity land to Conservative bands in the region; Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla," 244, 247. Outside Mexico, James Sanders provides a comprehensive discussion of "popular indigenous conservatism" in Colombia's Cauca region; Sanders, *Contentious Republicans.*

peasants are easily dismissed. But on the other hand, this view rests on the more enduring assumption that an unbridgeable cultural chasm divided the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Catholic masses. Mallon, for example, finds that while Liberal intellectuals often bemoaned the peasant's attachment to religion and thus lost an essential link to the countryside, Conservatives, too, failed to capitalize on peasant religiosity. They did so "because of the hierarchical representations of power within their movement. […] Conservatives wanted to incorporate communal hegemonic discourses, not to change relations in the communities but to reproduce and further centralize them."[5] Even scholars of popular Conservative movements such as Lozada's affirm this view. While the Conservative elite were intent on preserving their privileged status, Mario Aldana Rendón argues, their followers were attempting to safeguard their communal land from Liberal expropriation.[6] Jean Meyer, too, finds a wide cultural gulf and different incentives for fighting separated the distinct worlds of the Conservative elite and the rural masses.[7] At their base, these views are the faint echos—albeit more polite—of the virulently anti-Church histories penned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In that literature, Conservatism's true believers were elite reactionaries, a relatively few wealthy landowners and clergymen bent on preserving a colonial caste system they led. Their peasant supporters, meanwhile, blindly offered themselves as martyrs on the front lines.[8] Essentially, all peasants were more or less Catholic; some were merely misled by a greedy shepherd.

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[5] Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 96.
[6] Aldana, *La rebelión agraria de Manuel Lozada*, 71; *Cf.* Jáuregui, "Lozada como Sáutari."
[7] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 126, 146–160; *Cf.* Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 78–87.
[8] For example, see Sierra, *Juárez*, 160–161.

But one of the most important lessons of the subaltern school is that taking popular religion seriously is key to comprehending popular revolt.[9] Drawing on a wide variety of archival sources—ecclesiastical as well as civil—this study finds that the rural men and women who supported Conservatism did so because they supported something more than a vague "religion" or nondescript "Catholicism." They supported the structure and protection that the Church provided in their communities. In Nayarit, the clergy had cultivated agrarian roots since the early colonial period, donating seed and livestock to confraternities and long permitting cofrades (brotherhood members) almost complete control over local church property. And in the Querétaro highlands, priests lent money, erected schools, and served in politics throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Local caciques, in turn, supported the priesthood with their own family members, sending men and women to join the clergy across urban and rural Querétaro. Popular Conservatism in these regions reflected rural parishioners' desires to maintain this structure, to maintain a Catholic order.

This study builds on and counters a number of recent historiographical trends. First, it seeks to add depth to the growing literature on Mexican political Conservatism. Indeed, recent political events in Mexico have driven a new generation of historians to re-examine the roots of Conservatism, albeit at the national level. After the 2000 electoral victory of the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)—coming after seven decades of one-party rule—Erika Pani, Brian Hamnett, Will Fowler, Humberto Morales Moreno, and Brian Connaughton, have re-

[9] Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," 78. See further discussion below.

examined the role played by the "bad guys of the story."[10] In a proliferation of studies, these scholars have picked apart the crude stereotype of grasping elites bent on preserving their wealth and status while suppressing the lower classes. Instead, recent studies have shown mid-century national leaders were genuinely interested in stabilizing the country after decades of war and territorial disintegration. Fowler and Morales, for instance, detail how Conservative thought evolved to combat both Liberal reformers' socially disruptive attacks on "traditional values" and the chronic instability of the federalist system.[11] And Connaughton examines how the ecclesiastical hierarchy worked to construct a "Catholic nation" in order to foster unity while some members of the lower clergy publicly attacked the corporate Church.[12]

Despite the excellent work done thus far, popular support for Conservatism remains largely unexamined. As Hamnett points out:

> The historical literature has not been able to establish with regard to Conservatism similar linkages between national, provincial and local levels to those which have emerged in the investigation of Liberalism in the Reform era. On the other hand, there seems to be a qualitative distinction between the Conservatism of upper echelons of society, particularly those in Mexico City, and provincial groups. These latter may, in fact, present the real face of Conservatism.[13]

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[10] O'Gorman, *La supervivencia política novohispana*, 5. *Cf.* Pani, *Conservadurismo y derechas*; Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives"; Fowler and Morales, *El conservadurismo mexicano*; and Connaughton, *Dimensiones de la identidad patriótica*.
[11] Fowler and Morales, "Una (re)definición del conservadurismo mexicano," 11–36.
[12] Connaughton, *Clerical Ideology*, 80; and Connaghton, *Entre la voz de dios y el llamado de la patria*, 171–202.
[13] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 190.

Few historians have answered this call. A number of conceptual hurdles remain in this particular field. The first hurdle is one of definition. A concept such as popular Liberalism lends itself to somewhat simple definition. Peasants selectively supported or rejected a number of Liberal platforms, such as the National Guard, popular sovereignty, and the disamortization of communal lands.[14] But Conservatism, much less its popular variety, eludes such classification. Conversations with half a dozen scholars yield just as many distinct responses.

At the national level, some posit Conservatism was principally reactionary, the antithesis of Liberalism.[15] In this view, Conservatives did not propose innovative platforms, but rather coalesced around a rejection of the Liberal platforms that seemed to be failing and/or threatened Conservatives' interests. Hence the turn first toward dictatorship, then the embrace of a European monarch in the 1850s and '60s. Federalism had failed, and even a moderate centralist government did not prove strong enough to stabilize the young country. Conservative support for the Church could be equally stuffy and reactionary. For example, one nineteenth-century observer explained that national religious tolerance

> "might be very good for France, England and other countries, where religion is studied by principles, and where a nine-year-old boy is a dogmatic theologian. But here, where most only know God is Three-in-One because they heard someone say it, I say that tolerance is not appropriate, and we do not have the legs for this pair of pants."[16]

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[14] According to Thomson, the most popular characteristics of the national Liberal program included "the abolition of compulsory personal services, the reorganisation of the army with the abolition of the *leva* [military conscription], freedom of commerce, popular elections and, in areas where the Catholic clergy had lost its legitimacy, religious freedom"; Thomson, "Popular Aspects of Liberalism," 273.
[15] Christopher Boyer, conversation with the author, August 2009.
[16] Cited in Connaughton, *Clerical Ideology*, 208.

But other scholars have demonstrated that Conservatism had deep ideological roots, and predated the Liberal reforms of the 1850s. Charles Hale, for instance, suggested some elements of the Conservative program "can be traced back to 1833 if not to 1810."[17] Donald Stevens goes further and details the general characteristics of Conservative regimes, describing them as "economically progressive" and favoring a "bureaucratic interventionist state" as opposed to Liberal *laissez-faire* policies, for example.[18]

Moreover, Mexican Liberalism had deep religious roots, as well. Liberals' supposed secularization campaign can be traced back to reformist Catholicism in the early to mid eighteenth century. "Enlightened" Catholics of the late colonial period sought to dampen the public fervor and display of Baroque Catholicism, and instead encouraged a more internalized piety. Pamela Voekel follows this shift in urban funeral celebrations, as they transformed from public celebrations of wealth, with plenty of pomp, to quiet, more democratic affairs devoid of ostentation. Nineteenth-century Liberals were the intellectual heirs of this eighteenth-century Catholic reform, Voekel argues. This reform "provided the cultural matrix for certain elite liberals' post-Independence vision of a nation characterized by claims to the sovereignty and legal equality of all 'virtuous' citizens."[19] And many of Liberalism's first luminaries, such as José María Luis Mora, were clergymen themselves.[20]

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[17] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, 15.
[18] Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, 30–32.
[19] Voekel, *Alone Before God*, 16. For a similar study of changes in religious practice in a Brazilian context, see Reis, *Death is a Festival*.
[20] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, 72–73.

Much of the recent work on national Conservatism—and national politics in general—reflects this ambivalence. Instead of a Liberal-Conservative binary, scholars have found important members of each party betrayed sympathy for the other side.[21] Fowler, for instance, details the "traditionalist Liberalism" of early-nineteenth-century writer Carlos María Bustamante, highlighting the "Guadalupan faith" that most distinguished him from his peers.[22] Meanwhile, Connaughton points to Catholic Liberals, and Voekel discusses Liberal Catholics.[23] Amid this confusion, some scholars have thrown up their hands. The duty of historians, Erika Pani argues, should not be to pursue an illusory definition, but rather to disentangle "the complexities of the political dynamic…in order to discover what was in play" in that era.[24]

This ambiguity over the definition of national Conservatism has its corollary at the popular level. Some scholars question whether the pursuit of an ideological distinction between popular Liberalism and Conservatism is bound to be fruitless, as autonomy was the ultimate aim of most rebellious communities.[25] This is, of course, true only in the most general sense. Arguably all rebellious rural communities sought some measure of control over local affairs, whether it was

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[21] In this, the current wave of new scholarship builds upon existing work. In his examination of early nineteenth-century Liberalism, for instance, Hale points out that moderate Liberals typically supported the position of the Church in Mexican society; *Mexican Liberalism*.
[22] Fowler, "Carlos María Bustamante," 59–85.
[23] Connaughton views famed Liberal author José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi as a pro-clerical reformer, for instance; Connaughton, "Transiciones en la cultura político/religiosa mexicana," 458. Voekel, on the other hand, discusses the Reform-era Liberal schismatic church; "Liberal Religion," 78–105.
[24] Pani, "Las fuerzas oscuras," 21. Fowler and Morales reach the same conclusion and proceed to distinguish variations in Conservatism over time; Fowler and Morales, "Una (re)definición del conservadurismo mexicano," 11–36.
[25] Buve, *Autonomía, religión y bandidaje*. James Cypher has also adopted this position of ambivalence in his dissertation on the Sierra Gorda. As he explains, "[w]hen liberals held Mexico City, the Sierra looked like a conservative bastion; when conservatives decreed from above, the Sierra rose to the defend the Nation"; Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 11.

control over worship or military recruitment or land distribution. But not all uprising was strictly local in nature. Conservative rebels in Querétaro certainly had broader horizons than those seen from the town belfry.[26] As mentioned above, Mejía's rural troops from the Sierra Gorda did not remain in Querétaro, but rather traveled to, and fought and died in places as distant as Guadalajara and Tamaulipas. Beyond simply defending local forms of worship, Querétaro fighters sought to defend the institution of the Church and the privileges of its ministers.

The "autonomist" view of peasant politics also suggests that rebellious communities were ideologically inert. In other words, a community's adherence to a Liberal or Conservative program was largely dictated by reaction to immediate circumstance. Certainly, political ideology did not run as deep in some communities as others. Liberalism had shallow roots in the Sierra de Puebla, for example, yet the town of Tetela ultimately became the cornerstone of serrano Liberalism there during the Reform war and the Second Empire. As Thomson points out, Tetela's initial swing toward Liberalism hung largely on its relations with the larger parish seat of Zacapoaxtla. The latter was a Conservative stronghold, launching a rebellion against the Liberal government in 1856 and "repeatedly serv[ing] as a springboard for Conservative attempts at political resurgence in state politics" through the 1850s and '60s.[27] In the 1850s, Tetela was pursuing a legal case against the Zacapoaxtla parish priest, and when Pres. Santa Anna did not

[26] As Eric Van Young describes in his study of the independence war, "[i]ndigenous peasants, who made up the largest group among the insurgents, were profoundly localocentric in their worldview, and their actions tended to be constrained by the political and affective *campanilismo* characteristic of their mentality"; Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 62. For the classic discussion of the localocentric nature of peasant politics in Europe, see Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 242.
[27] Thomson, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, 45, 48.

adequately address Tetela's claims, the community's leaders turned to Liberal authorities after 1854 for redress.[28]

But the Nayarit communities studied in the present work (like those in Querétaro) demonstrated a firm ideological conviction in their support for Conservatism. In Nayarit, for example, rebels initially opposed clerical intervention in local church affairs, to the point of driving out many parish priests in the region in the early 1850s. Yet these rebels ultimately supported the Conservative cause, and welcomed clergymen back to the region. In many cases, these were the same priests who had been driven out only a short time before. If rebels there had chosen sides in the mid-century civil war based largely on reaction, then Nayarit should have been a Liberal stronghold. But this was not the case. Rebels supported the Church. Here, they re-negotiated terms with local clergy to permit more control over spiritual affairs, and fought as Conservatives.

The second conceptual hurdle in the study of popular Conservatism concerns the nature of religious rebellion. Many historians of the nineteenth century are quick to categorize religious revolt in this period as millenarian. The term refers to a particular manifestation of religious piety, defining any group possessed by religious fervor in anticipation of either collective flight to heaven or a new, divine world order. Believers expect these events to occur at a date within their lifetime.[29]

Many such revolts occurred worldwide in this period. The Taiping civil war from 1850 to 1864, for instance, eventually claimed tens of millions of lives as much of southern China split off to

[28] Ibid.
[29] Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 7.

form a theocratic rebel state. The leader of the movement, Hong Xiuquan, found inspiration in a Christian missionary tract and believed himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ.[30] The "Ghost Dance" movement among western indigenous groups in the 1890s United States offers another example. The Pauite seer Wovoka claimed to have visited heaven during an eclipse, and God instructed him to initiate a dance among all indigenous groups in the U.S. west in order to bring back their dead. The U.S. military violently quelled the movement, most notably in the massacre at Wounded Knee.[31] Brazil, too, was home to numerous millenarian movements in the northeastern *sertão*. At Canudos, Antônio Conselheiro preached a brutal penitence to thousands of zealous followers, who rejected the new Brazilian Republic and held out against three military incursions before finally succumbing to a fourth in 1897.[32] Other backlands prophets such as Padre Cícero and Pedro Batista continued to draw followers in the region well into the twentieth century.[33]

The contemporary elite observers of these seemingly anti-modernist movements denigrated rebels as "fanatical" or "superstitious." Euclides da Cunha, for example, described Antônio Conselheiro's sermons as "barbarous and terrifying… a hopelessly confused mixture of dogmatic counsels, the vulgar precepts of Christian morality, and weird prophecies." Conselheiro's followers, meanwhile, combined zealotry with violence and were "capable of loading their homicidal blunderbusses with the beads of their rosaries."[34] Mexican observers said

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[30] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 15, 23.
[31] Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 165, 191.
[32] For the classic text on this event, see da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*. Robert Levine offers a "revisitation," if not a strict revision, in *Vale of Tears*.
[33] Della Cava, *Miracle at Joasiero*; and Pessar, *From Fanatics to Folk*.
[34] Da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, 133, 151.

much the same of Manuel Lozada. As Salvador Quevedo y Zubieta described in this late-nineteenth-century memoir,

> "[t]he bandit of Mexico, as in almost all countries, is profoundly devout … and in his religion idolatrous sentiment prevails … he does not search for his God beyond the clouds, nor encounters His image in the impalpable ether, nor ascends to the hills to issue his prayer, but rather seeks Him out, finds Him and invokes Him in the scapular, in the *santo* of wood and in the *guadalupana* … Lozada was not an exception to this class of bandits."[35]

Moreover, this stain of "fanaticism" continues to color the historiography of many of these movements. Ralph della Cava warns that "millenarian" has become merely a scholarly euphemism for "fanatic." As he explains,

> "a too rigid *a priori* perception of every popular religious movement as necessarily and exclusively messianic and millenarian risks being as restricted today as were the earlier nineteenth century interpretations which branded almost all such movements as 'fanatical,' 'deviant,' 'retrogressive,' and the product of a culturally 'backward' society."[36]

This analytical category risks reducing all religious rebellion to mere curiosity, forever stuck in the "cul-de-sac of religious heterodoxy" and never entering "the main road of social revolution."[37] Paul Vanderwood's study of the Tomóchic rebellion in northern Mexico demonstrates this risk. *Mestizo* Tomóchic residents in the late nineteenth century led a religious revival movement, centered around veneration of a local female healer and partially guided by a

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[35] Quevedo y Zubieta, *México: recuerdos de un emigrado*, 83–5.
[36] della Cava, *Miracle at Joaseiro*, 3.
[37] Knight, "Rethinking the Tomóchic Rebellion," 393.

local backlands prophet. After disputes with the local strongman, authorities painted *tomochitecos* as "bandits" and "fanatics" and ultimately sent in the federal army to quell the movement. So far, so good. But Vanderwood then takes pains to categorize the rebellion as millenarian, suggestively titling sections like "Armageddon" and referring to the female healer as a "woman-god, returned as promised in a blazing millennial vision of the glorious world to come."[38] The evidence is thin. With no documentation of any messianic tendencies on the part of rebel leader Cruz Chávez, Vanderwood is forced to merely question if Chávez invited conflict "as *his* means to a better world to come—a world still envisioned and promised, however imprecisely, in so many varieties of religiosity."[39]

Steeped in this millennial framework, religion becomes an otherworldly phenomenon. By extension, rebels with a religious cause become single-minded zealots. This cause then becomes an aberration, examined in relative isolation from broader political or social implications.[40] Rebellions are viewed in terms of a sacred-profane binary, "the power of God against the guns of government." Conversely, when measured against this millenarian yardstick, the Conservative rebellions in Nayarit and Querétaro come up short. Both Zachary Brittsan and James Cypher, for example, are quick to point out that the rebellions in Nayarit and Querétaro showed no millenarian tendencies.[41] And while both scholars devote some space to examining the more mundane religious components to each movement, they broadly downplay any religious

[38] Vanderwood, *The Power of God*, 303.
[39] Vanderwood, *The Power of God*, 10, emphasis original. Alan Knight meticulously picks apart Vanderwood's emphasis on millenarianism in "Rethinking the Tomóchic Rebellion," 384–387.
[40] An important exception is Todd Diacon's *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality*.
[41] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 78, 82; and Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 143.

motivation and instead focus on political concerns. Many scholars of the nineteenth century tend to interpret religious causation as all encompassing: in rebellions, it is either all or nothing.

But other scholars are finding that religion and politics are inextricably linked. Outside of Mexico, this work largely began in the 1980s under the rubric of subaltern studies. For scholars such as Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee, considering peasant consciousness in political uprisings, and thus taking seriously rebel religion, itself became an act of rebellion. Through Guha's study, for example, he challenged an historiography of Indian peasant insurgency that had maintained the colonialist line—namely, that rebel leaders cynically used religion to motivate the peasant masses. In his discussion of the 1855 Santal *hool* against the British Raj, Guha finds that "[r]eligiosity was central to the [uprising]." Furthermore, religion did not merely provide the form of rebellion, only shaping a struggle that was at its foundation a struggle for power. "[I]t is not possible to speak of insurgency in this case," Guha explains, "except as a religious consciousness."[42] Partha Chatterjee expands on that consciousness, explaining that insurgent religion is not necessarily wholly distinct from that of those in power. "[T]he same set of ethical norms or religious practices which justify existing relations of domination," he writes, "also contain, in a single dialectical unity, the justification for legitimate revolt."[43] Thus, Catholic rebels aggrieved by religious and political authorities will sometimes erect quasi-Catholic institutions in lieu of the Church. "Talking crosses" appeared during the Yucatán Caste War, for example, and the faithful in Nayarit constructed a Marian shrine at the direction of a teenage seer.[44]

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[42] Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," 78.
[43] Chatterjee, "More on Modes of Power," 379.
[44] Rugeley, *Rebellion Now and Forever*, 3.

These lessons have crossed the Atlantic in the recent works of political historians such as Terry Rugeley, Robert Curley, Matthew Butler and his students Brian Stauffer and Salvador Salinas, Ben Fallaw, and Benjamin Smith.[45] Most of this work covers the twentieth-century Revolutionary period, offering a revisionist perspective on a civil war long considered a secular affair.[46] Just as Guha found in postcolonial India, these scholars have found that religion did not merely adorn a fundamentally agrarian rebellion. The Mexican Revolution offered new avenues for religious expression, and fighters on either side utilized that expression. In his investigation of the 1926–29 *cristero* rebellion, for example, Butler revealed that the particular religious history of different regions influenced how people in those regions responded to rebellion. In northern Michoacán, the longstanding presence of the secular clergy and the more clerically controlled environment of the hacienda and mining chapels in the colonial period led to a violent rejection of Revolutionary anticlericalism in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, independent pueblos and a less-involved regular clergy dominated life in colonial southern Michoacán, which became an *agrarista* haven during the Revolution. "[R]eligion mattered as peasants negotiated a path between the conflicting agendas of Church and state," explained Butler, "[and] the popular antagonisms which attended the cristero revolt included genuine ideological, indeed religious, differences between the contending peasant factions."[47]

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[45] Ibid.; Curley, " 'The First Encounter' "; Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity*; Stauffer, "Death to the Protestants! Long Live Religion!: Catholic Revitalization, Parish Culture and Political Mobilization during Michoacán's Religionero Conflict (1873-1877)"; Salinas, "Untangling Mexico's Noodle"; Fallaw, *Religion and State-Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico*; and Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*.
[46] For the classic view, see Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution*.
[47] Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity*, 26–27, 3.

Benjamin Smith has continued this work by detailing the development of Conservatism over two centuries in Oaxaca's Mixteca Baja. Essentially, a particular type of moral economy sustained a "provincial Conservatism" in this remote mountain region. Beginning in the colonial period, commoners offered their labor and obedience to indigenous elites and the local clergy in exchange for their support of local cults. "Religion was so fundamental to these agreements," Smith explains, "they might be better termed a spiritual economy and the community […] a 'congregation.' "[48] Priests maintained these agreements during the turbulent nineteenth century by helping parishioners refashion religious institutions, such as lay brotherhoods, as the superficially secular *sociedades agrícolas*. And attacks from anticlerical bands of Zapatistas during the Revolution helped keep the Mixteca Baja on the clerical defensive well into the twentieth century.[49]

An Investigation of Popular Conservatisms

This study builds on this literature, recognizing that religion and politics were interwoven in Mexican provincial life. In the mid nineteenth century, this interconnection was manifest in rural support for the Church, or popular Conservatism. But given the geographic, demographic, and historical variables differentiating each region of support, these phenomena might better be termed popular Conservatisms. Just as Thomson has pointed to many "Liberalisms," so, too, Mexico's early nineteenth century offered fertile ground for a plurality of Conservatisms that

[48] Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, 26. *Cf*. Gosner, *Soldiers of the Virgin*; and Burns, *Colonial Habits*.
[49] Ibid., 67, 174, 217. *Cf*. Mijangos, "La negativa al juramento constitucional."

sought to preserve certain key elements of the status quo amid drastic social change.[50] Among these Conservatisms, one principal factor largely determined how and when certain regions moved to support Conservatives during the Reform period.

Specifically, the different modes and rhythms of priest-parishioner relations over the *médian durée* in each region led to different modes of Conservatism. Just like the state, the Church is not a monolithic, immutable entity. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the institution had undergone dramatic transformation. First, the inability of the newly independent Mexican state to reach an accord with the Vatican left every diocese vacant by the end of the country's first decade.[51] Second, party politics offered educated young men a new opportunity for advancement outside a career in the clergy, and many took that opportunity. In Nayarit, successive generations of reformist clergy from 1800 to 1850 broadly upset the "spiritual economy" that their predecessors had helped establish in the early colonial period. Confraternities, or lay brotherhoods dedicated to a saint or devotion that held land and livestock in common, were at the heart of this economy. Confraternity property was the currency that paid for Masses, church upkeep, and the needs of individual *cofrades* (confraternity members). In exchange, priests did not intervene in confraternity affairs and broadly turned a blind eye to—if not explicitly supported—heterodox local practices. This arrangement remained untouched for most of the colonial period. But beginning in the late eighteenth century, clerical reformers attempted to assert control over the lay brotherhoods and rent or sell their property. This maneuver set off decades of disputes between priests and parishioners over dwindling confraternity resources, and

[50] Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, 23.
[51] Staples, *La iglesia*, 21–24.

ended in violent uprising at mid century. The clergy alienated their flock precisely in a period when new opportunities for redress were opening up, legitimate or otherwise.

Meanwhile, in Querétaro the clergy gradually established ever-tighter links with serrano villages. Otomí settlers were the first to make inroads into the Sierra Gorda in the early sixteenth century, and they supported a number of regular missions into the eighteenth century. Beginning in the late colonial period, a Spanish and mixed-race population "conquered" the Sierra and began harassing the Otomí pueblos along the frontier. But a number of secular priests, in turn, supported these pueblos against this new population of soldiers and aggressive hacendados. At first, this support came in the form of loans to fund legal cases over land disputes. Over the course of the nineteenth century, support expanded as priests erected schools and served in regional politics. These cross-class relationships then became blood ties as local caciques supplied family members to join the clergy.

These distinct histories of priest-parishioner relations in turn created distinct modes of Conservatism: a pragmatic mode and a clerical mode. The rebellion in Nayarit best exemplifies the pragmatic mode. In that scenario, rebels and the Church represented two more or less distinct entities that negotiated to reach a mutually acceptable compromise. As mentioned above, the conflict between priests and parishioners became violent in the 1850s. The Nayarit clergy had wrested complete control of confraternity property from cofrades and sold it off in order to reinvest it under the Church's guiding hand. For their part, cofrades sought to win back the property they had long considered their own. Parishioners rebelled, allying with a local "gang leader"—Manuel Lozada—who promised to restore their lands. This maneuver forced the

ecclesiastical hierarchy in Guadalajara to act. Faced with a radical Liberal government in power in Mexico City and an expanding insurrection in its own diocese, the Guadalajara See compromised with rebels. Lozada sought and received a number of important concessions for his followers, including restored communal lands, resident clergy for the remote rural areas under his control, and a *de facto* parish based in his hometown.

Importantly, the forced nature of this compromise does not suggest that Lozada and his followers were a mere hair's breadth from becoming iconoclastic radical Liberals. Nayarit rebels demonstrated continuing esteem for the Catholic religion and its priesthood, even if certain priests were esteemed more highly than others. If the Guadalajara See had not compromised, rebels would likely have initiated an alternative Catholic cult centered on the Nayarit backlands even without official clerical guidance. Nonetheless, the communities may have drifted toward a more moderate, clerical Liberalism over time, such as that found in the Sierra de Puebla under Juan Francisco Lucas.[52] But the Church hierarchy's compromise with rebels cemented their support of the Conservative side for decades to come.

In the clerical mode, the Church's alliance with militant Conservatism was an internal affair. As caciques established blood ties to numerous clergy in both rural and urban Querétaro, Reform-era rebels were fighting for their families as much as the institutional Church. And unlike in

[52] To mitigate the disruptive effects of the Reform-era disamortization decrees, for example, Lucas negotiated "locally acceptable privatization arrangements . . . in exchange for support from these communities in regional insurrections"; Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, 18, 231. Furthermore, Lucas served as the foil to a notorious Liberal iconoclast during the Reform war. Antonio Carbajal, like Antonio Rojas of Tepic, abused serrano populations through rape and plunder on his campaigns, and sacked churches to boot; Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla," 243; Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 66. For Antonio Rojas's anticlerical outrages, see Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 120; and Herrera, *Dentro de la República*, 117–118.

Nayarit, clergy in the Sierra Gorda explicitly supported and shaped rebellion. Many priests in the region threatened to excommunicate any who swore an oath to the anticlerical 1857 constitution, and pressured public officials to speak out against the Liberal regime. Some even joined Mejía's forces and actively rallied supporters from the serrano population. As a result, Mejía's rebellion left the Sierra and entered the national sphere. Fighters were not simply defending local religious practice, but rather the legal and moral position of the institutional Church in Mexican society. Unlike Lozada and his followers, who only vaguely supported "religion" in their public pronouncements, Mejía explicitly supported clerical privilege and Church property rights.[53]

In terms of methodology, this sort of study is only possible through geographic precision, a diverse archival base, and comparative investigation. First, this study attempts to bring geographical clarity to the rebellions under study here. In both Nayarit and Querétaro, scholars tend to paint the rural countryside in broad strokes, putting entire states within the "domains" of Lozada and Mejía. But these strongmen had specific, identifiable headquarters from which they operated. In Nayarit, for example, rebels often operated and hid in the Sierra itself, but Lozada's base never moved from the lowland frontier. Mejía's base straddled the frontier and Sierra, but his headquarters remained well within Querétaro's state boundary.

Moreover, towns rarely rose up en masse, either for or against Conservatives. Instead, Lozada's and Mejía's fighters seem to have been linked more by social class than geography. In Nayarit, numerous small communities in the foothills of the Sierra Madre—identified by both outsiders and residents as Indian pueblos—served as rebel staging grounds, while larger towns supplied

[53] Miró, *El general Rafael Olvera*, 46–48.

only "Indian" fighters. In Querétaro, meanwhile, Mejía attracted an aspirant rancher class to his cause. While he was frequently identified as Otomí or "Indian," his supporters rarely were.

These geographic and demographic distinctions are important. Nineteenth-century observers often denounced Lozada's rebellion as a "caste war," comparable to the ongoing civil war in the Yucatán. And situating him within the Sierra Madre completed the picture, as the region was long identified as a holdout for "barbarous Indians" during the colonial period. Most scholars have adopted this description, and with it subsequently find that official Conservatism was little but a thin veneer for support of Indian communal lands.[54] As will be seen, this was not the case. Lozada and his followers shrewdly negotiated with clerical and political authorities to set up a rebel state in Nayarit, one that became a flashpoint for Mexican state-building in the 1870s.

As for Mejía, James Cypher's recent study of the Sierra Gorda demonstrates the hazards of using impressionistic data to generalize about an entire region. After examining municipal politics and religious conflict in towns scattered across the breadth of the Sierra—encompassing the states of Guanajuato, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Hidalgo—Cypher comes to the conclusion that neither Liberalism nor Conservatism had much influence in the region. Communities instead fought to defend local autonomy. But this gives short shrift to the deep Conservative roots in northeastern Querétaro. Mejía's fighters did not range across Mexico to defend local autonomy, but rather to defend the clerical privileges they had come to embody.

[54] Aldana, *La rebelión agraria de Manuel Lozada*, 71.

Second, in order to investigate the role of religion in politics in nineteenth-century Mexico, one must draw on a wide variety of sources. In Nayarit, the parish archives housed in the Archdiocese of Guadalajara proved the richest source by far. But these had to be supplemented by the notarial and agrarian archives in Guadalajara and Tepic, which allow the historian to reconstruct at least some confraternities' histories, as well as see the economic repercussions of the rebellion. Meanwhile, the legislative archive in Guadalajara reconstructed the legal battles between Church and state in the post-independence period. The Guadalajara library houses an ever-expanding colonial-era collection, and the mission archive of Zapopan helped fill in some gaps in the Sierra's colonial history.

By contrast, the parish archives housed in the Mexico City archdiocese are comparatively anemic. And the parish archives in the small communities of the Sierra Gorda are either closed to the public or in disarray. For Querétaro, then, the study of popular Conservatism relies upon the rich state and judicial archives. The land sales and legal cases housed there demonstrate the depth of clerical involvement in mundane affairs, as well as the economic activities of leading serrano families. Rounding out this research, of course, are the various national archives in Mexico City and a few collections in the United States, such as those at the University of Michigan and the University of Texas at Austin, and the baptismal records kept by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Third, in studies of national movements, comparison is essential if one is to transcend the idiosyncrasies of regional and institutional histories and draw broader conclusions.[55] Regarding the Church in the early nineteenth century alone, various historians examining various regions and institutions have reached drastically different conclusions. By focusing on clerical personnel, for example, both Anne Staples and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, have found the Church was largely incapacitated in the early republican era, too weak to exert much pressure on the state and instead used as a rhetorical cudgel by exploitative military men.[56] To be sure, the situation looked dire by 1829: every Mexican bishop had either died or fled, and the few remaining lower clergy had split on the issue of anticlericalism. But the near demise of the institutional Church did not necessarily spell the end of Catholicism in Mexico. Only a few short years later in 1833, the acting president was ousted after he sparked a small civil war centered on clerical rights and privileges. Indeed, priests alone do not make the Church. As William Taylor has found by examining local piety, the laity stepped in and carried on religious praxis in the lean times.[57]

Meanwhile, an urban-rural opposition can be found in Oaxaca. In his study of nascent political parties in the urban areas of Antequera and Villa Alta, Peter Guardino has found that the Church issue did not divide politicians as much as, say, support for federalism or centralism.[58] But in the rural Mixteca Baja, Ben Smith has found that the local clergy were key figures in shaping and supporting Conservative pueblo politics through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[59] This

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[55] Mary Kay Vaughan and Matthew Butler exemplify well this comparative model, in, respectively, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*; and *Popular Piety and Political Identity*.
[56] Staples, *La iglesia*, 21–24; and Vázquez, "Iglesia, ejército, y centralismo," 205–206.
[57] Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images*, 166.
[58] Guardino, *The Time of Liberty*, 159, 215. Guardino reaches a similar conclusion for rural Guerrero; *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State*, 98.
[59] Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, 66.

opposition holds for Nayarit, as well. As discussed above, much of the literature on national-level politics finds key figures of all political stripes were ambivalent on the matter of religion. But an emphasis on confusion at the center elides the more clear-cut distinction between clericalism and anticlericalism in the periphery. Like an impressionist painting, what is fuzzy up-close becomes sharply defined from a distance. Far removed from Mexico City both physically and politically, Liberal and Conservative fighters in the canton of Tepic engaged in a no-holds-barred war over religion.

While theology-savvy liberals in Mexico City took pains to show themselves anticlerical but not irreligious, the provincial "wild men of the party" engaged in punitive actions around Tepic that presaged revolutionary-era defanaticization campaigns.[60] Liberal general Ramón Corona executed a priest in 1861 for suspected collaboration with Lozada, while his iconoclast compatriot Antonio Rojas reportedly stabled his horses directly atop the popular *cruz de zacate*, a cross formed of perpetually verdant grass growing in an arid zone.[61] Rojas also adopted the *modus operandi* of other anticlerical fighters, unearthing the plumbing beneath the cross that fed its "miraculous" proliferation.[62] Parishioners in Santa María del Oro complained in 1862 that

[60] Although the quote comes from a U.S. priest's report on revolutionary-era anticlerical politicians, it is nevertheless apropos for mid-1800s Tepic; Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, 231. For more on revolutionary defanaticization, see Knight, "Mentality and Modus Operandi" ; Bantjes, "Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico"; and Fallaw, "Varieties of Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism."

[61] Herrera, *Dentro de la República*, 117–118. Rojas's actions are reminiscent of another noted iconoclast Liberal general, Antonio Carbajal in Hidalgo; Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla," 243.

[62] Voekel describes an almost identical tale just outside Mexico City, when liberal journalists during the Reform unearthed the plumbing beneath the grass that miraculously grew at the foot of a cross, in "Liberal Religion," 80.

liberal forces had "violated" their church.[63] On the other side of the coin, only religion itself was sacred to Conservative fighters. Neither priests nor churches themselves were given sanctuary from righteous attempts to preserve religion's place in society, as we shall see. While Liberal and Conservative ideologues in Mexico City may have engaged in a war of words, Liberal and Conservative forces in the countryside largely determined how that ideology would translate into action and policy.

But the same conclusion—namely, that popular Conservatism coalesced around the defense of the local church—could not be reached for Querétaro. Except for a few brief moments, the churches of Querétaro, much less in the Sierra Gorda, were not at risk of falling into the hands of rabid iconoclasts. Unlike in Jalisco, the Querétaro state government had long supported the institutional Church with decrees that protected clerical education, for example, and denounced anticlerical federal measures.[64] Furthermore, rebel clergy freely roamed the Sierra, as mentioned above. Instead of localocentrism, the broader desire to uphold a national clerical order urged on Mejía's fighters.

Examined in isolation, the rebellions in Nayarit and Querétaro may have offered different conclusions: indeed, the difference between what I have termed pragmatic and clerical modes of popular Conservatism. Neither mode by itself can explain the Catholic Church's enduring influence in the countryside. Instead, a comparison of the two regions demonstrates that Mexican society has embraced Catholicism and the Church in a variety of ways, illustrating the

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[63] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 12 May 1862.
[64] Llano Ibáñez, *Iglesia y sociedad*, 47–51; and Costeloe, "Church-State Financial Negotiations," 102.

institution's lasting influence. It is only in comparison that the Nayarit and Querétaro rebellions become two parts of a broader movement: a movement to support the continuing privileged place of the Catholic religion in the Mexican public sphere.

Chapter Layout

This study is divided into two parts. Part I examines Nayarit from the sixteenth century to 1873, and is itself divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 details the development of a compromise between colonial authorities and the new settlers in northwestern New Galicia from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. It examines the changing demographics of the region, as well as the rebellions that prompted authorities to grant *frontereños* (frontier residents) relative autonomy in exchange for forming a barrier against "barbaric" highlanders. It also looks at the origin of a spiritual economy in which priests and parishioners negotiated acceptable limits on political and clerical authority.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine roughly the same period, 1750 to 1850. Chapter 2 details the legislative battles between the Church and the state regarding ecclesiastical property. It is a broadly macro-level examination of both viceregal and Jaliscan state legislation, and the response by the Mexican Church, primarily the Guadalajara See. Glimpses of the laws' effects at the parish level in Nayarit are dispersed throughout. One of the more important conclusions of this chapter is that the Lerdo Law—an 1856 decree meant to forcibly sell off Church property—had little effect on the ground in Nayarit.

Chapter 3, meanwhile, examines in close detail the termination of the colonial compromise discussed in the first chapter. It investigates colonial authorities' initial attempts to bring the frontier under stricter political control, and how that campaign changed following independence. The reforms initiated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy to streamline confraternity administration had the greatest impact on the Nayarit frontier, as priests removed Indian mayordomos, clamped down on "profane" festivities, and halted unauthorized loans and gifts from sodality funds. These reforms continued after 1821. Priest-parishioner conflicts over confraternity property intensified both numerically and in nature into the 1850s. By mid century, these conflicts became violent as parishioners reclaimed territory and priests fled the region.

Chapter 4 describes how rebels, who at first seemed anticlerical, eventually came to support Conservatism and the Church. It first examines Conservative politics at the national and regional levels in order to provide context for Lozada's rebellion. The chapter then shifts to an investigation of the nature and immediate causes of rural rebellion in 1850s Nayarit, and how this both differed and aligned with elite Conservative aims in urban Tepic. It ends by examining the nature of Lozada's uprising in the Second Empire and beyond, focusing on the agrarian and religious changes he and his followers wrought in the region. An apparently anticlerical uprising ended in religious revival.

Part II covers the same period in Querétaro, namely, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is shorter than Part I, due in part to the fact that much of the macro-level groundwork is covered in the study's first half. It begins with Chapter 5, which details the Otomí pacification and settlement of the region. It then examines the region's continued economic,

political, and religious dominance by the Otomí as lowland caciques developed sufficient wealth and power to deflect colonial authorities' attempts to wrestle away their influence for more than a century. Moreover, Otomí communities along the frontier of the Sierra Gorda served as the sole buffer between "barbarism" and Christianity, between the unsubjugated highlands indigenous populations and the Querétaro lowlands, until the mid seventeenth century. The chapter then turns to the mid-eighteenth-century "conquest" of the Sierra Gorda, in which a new, mixed-race population sought to subjugate all serrano groups, including the Otomí settlers themselves. In response, Otomí leaders in the Sierra Gorda both violently fought back and began to negotiate with certain members of the European and mixed-race population—namely, priests and soldiers.

Chapter 6 details the development of a clerical and military society within the Sierra Gorda before turning to the mid-century rebellions. It investigates changing land tenure in the region as haciendas and Indian pueblos both lost land in the republican era. It then examines the rise of a new rancher class composed of priests, soldiers, and leaders within Indian communities, following in particular the Olvera and Mejía families. Finally, the chapter describes the changing nature of Sierra Gorda-based rebellion in the 1830s–60s as it expanded beyond local tobacco uprisings to the national level. The career of Tomás Mejía demonstrates this well as he transformed from the mere scion of a local strongman in the 1840s to a national military leader by the next decade.

Part I

Nayarit

CHAPTER 1

Race, Religion, and Security in Colonial Nayarit

Introduction

"The observance and punctual fulfillment of the Law of the Indies, regarding the foundation of Brotherhoods and confraternities for pious works, is almost impracticable in this Kingdom," explained the bishop of Guadalajara, Antonio Alcalde, to the intendant of New Galicia in 1788. For his part, the intendant sought information from the bishop on the funds and property that pertained to confraternities, or lay brotherhoods dedicated to a particular saint or image. With this financial data, the Spanish Crown could then lay claim to the property of any brotherhood that operated without royal license. But the intendant's request for an orderly accounting collided with the disordered reality of the colony's more remote regions. While most confraternities were indeed operating without license, the bishop continued to explain, their funds were essential to the cult. More importantly, any outside meddling with this property could bring down the precarious colonial edifice on New Galicia's outskirts.

> "With no other reason than that their priests delay some of their anniversary masses with good reason, or that they put a non-Indian in charge of confraternity administration in order to stop the withdrawals that the people of this caste tend to make, [the Indian brothers] are disturbed and worried […] Their dim intelligence, their recent conversion, their natural

> disposition to error, and, moreover, their hasty inclination to abandon their homes and flee to the hills, will produce fatal consequences and results if they misunderstand" the law.[1]

It was only through compromise, not imposition, that rulers and ruled co-existed along the colonial frontier.

This chapter details the development of that compromise in northwestern New Galicia from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. First, it examines the changing demographics of both the tierra caliente and the highlands as disease and conquest decimated the indigenous populations, and settlers and slaves were brought in to guard the lowlands and work the haciendas. Spanish conquistadors early on attempted to violently subjugate indigenous populations, and reduce the entirety of Mesoamerica to tributary status by dint of military strength. And this policy worked at first, due less to actual might than to the devastation that European diseases wrought on indigenous peoples, as well as the fractured and fractious nature of Mesoamerican principalities.

Second, it describes the rebellions that punctuated the early colonial period and the subsequent establishment of a compromise whereby *frontereños* (frontier residents) formed a barrier against "barbaric" highlanders in exchange for relative autonomy. By the mid sixteenth century, the refugees of conquest, acting in concert with those yet to be brought to heel, began mounting large-scale rebellions against Spanish colonial rule. A series of uprisings and numerous small-scale guerrilla raids soon demonstrated that uncompromising war would not bring lasting peace. Colonial officials sought compromise with rebels, and they soon developed a systematic policy

[1] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, 23 June 1788, folios 6, 8. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

of negotiation in the more remote frontier regions. Such negotiation would soon become integral to the Spanish enterprise as silver mines in these remote areas provided the vast bulk of the wealth sent from the colony to the metropole by the seventeenth century.

Third, it investigates the origin of a moral economy in which priests and parishioners negotiated acceptable limits on political and clerical authority. For its part, the Crown required that its subjects along the frontier perform military service and at least nominally accept Catholicism. In return, rural pueblos were allowed a large degree of local control of both politics and religion. Even long after the reformist Bourbons ascended the Spanish throne in the early eighteenth century, life along the frontier remained one of compromise.

This work builds on a number of recent developments in the colonial historiography. Regarding the composition of colonial military forces, scholars such as Matthew Restall, Michel Oudijk, Laura Matthew, and Ida Altman have recently demonstrated that indigenous fighters played a key role in the ostensibly "Spanish" conquests. Drawing on indigenous *probanzas* (whereby caciques demanded rewards for their roles in the conquest), for example, Oudijk and Restall find thousands of indigenous allies aided early Spanish conquistadors in Mesoamerica both militarily and with supplies.[2] Altman extends these findings to the western colony, highlighting the Mesoamerican troops contracted to fight the mid-sixteenth-century Mixtón War.[3] Most significantly for this current study, Bret Blosser finds that the descendants of these Mesoamerican troops continued to offer military service to the Crown into the eighteenth

[2] Oudijk and Restall, "Mesoamerican Conquistadors in the Sixteenth Century," 28–63. *Cf.* Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*.
[3] Altman, "Conquest, Coercion, and Collaboration," 150. *Cf.* Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*.

century. These descendants had worked out a compromise with the colonial state, in which their participation in distant campaigns and their ongoing vigilance of the Sierra del Nayarit was traded for exemption from tribute and a broad degree of political autonomy.[4] My own research confirms these findings, as Mesoamerican troops first aided the initial conquest of the Nayarit region. Moreover, their descendants continued to compose the security forces along the western flank of the Sierra del Nayarit throughout the colonial period, and they demanded special political privileges for their service. But unlike Blosser's study, I also examine the religious privileges these frontier settlers gained. It would be the local control of religious property and worship, not political autonomy, that would continue to define the region well beyond independence and into the postcolonial period.

Next, John Tutino has begun to problematize the notion of a Spanish-Indian racial binary in the colony's farther reaches.[5] Most notably, he suggests that "surely 10 percent, perhaps 20" of the Bajío population that was classified as "indio" and grouped in patriarchal households in the late colonial period was, instead, of African descent.[6] My research in the Nayarit frontier echoes these findings, as people of African descent freely entered Indian pueblos in that region. But beyond simply changing our notion of African-Indian relations in the colonial period—which other scholars have already begun to do—this points to the security that an "Indian identity" conveyed.[7] Indeed, Indian political status was still sufficiently desirable in the postcolonial

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[4] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives."
[5] Tutino, *Making a New World*.
[6] Ibid., 150–155.
[7] Patrick Carroll, for instance, finds that African-Indian relations were much more ambivalent than hostile, as colonial officials presented them. On one hand, "Spanish American criminal and church records abound with references to hostile native-black relations," Carroll explains. But these records obscure—sometimes intentionally—otherwise amicable relations. In other sources,

period that Manuel Lozada cast his mid-nineteenth-century uprising as as "Indian" rebellion despite evidence to the contrary.

Finally, the study of cofradías is undergoing a small renaissance in Mexico. A new cohort of scholars such as Eduardo Carrera, Clemente Cruz Peralta, María Dolores Palomo Infante, Cecilia Landa Fonseca, and Lara Mancuso have recently published works ranging from parish-level case studies in remote Chiapas and the Huasteca mountains, to comparative investigations on an international scale.[8] Much like their predecessors, these scholars examine the changing internal structure of these religious brotherhoods and focus on how these sodalities were funded, or the changing nature of corporate worship.[9] This study, in contrast, is not a study of communal funds or corporate religion *per se*. I instead place confraternities within a broader social context over the médian durée, investigating how parishioners' broad liberty over church funds in the colonial period led to bitter conflicts with priests and municipal officials in the nineteenth century.

The area under study comprises two regions: the sierra and the lowlands. On one hand, the craggy, treacherous extension of the Sierra Madre Occidental isolated the lush *tierra caliente* to its west, blocking overland trade with the silver-mining and agricultural zones in the Bajío to the east. Coupled with a poor coastline for harbors—the Pacific port of San Blas was roundly

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for instance, Spaniards decried Indians' refusal to expel blacks and *castas* from indigenous villages. Moreover, in the church and judicial records that highlight negative interaction, Carroll asserts "officials often used public documents as tools for social engineering … The state's demeaning of blacks, natives, and castas, as well as discouraging harmony between these subordinate groups, enhanced and protected Spanish control over them"; Carroll, "Black-Native Relations," 248, 261.

[8] Carrera, *Las voces de la fe*; Cruz Peralta, *Los bienes de los santos*; Palomo Infante, *Juntos y congregados*; Landa Fonseca, *Las cofradías en Querétaro*; and Mancuso, *Cofradías mineras*.

[9] *Cf.* Taylor and Chance, "Cofradías and Cargos."

"execrable and execrated" for its shallow berth, sweltering heat, and swarms of flies and mosquitos—this corner of New Spain's sister kingdom did not see much economic activity before the mid nineteenth century.[10] On the other hand, the Sierra del Nayarit offered a cultural refuge for indigenous highlands populations, as well as a permanent safety valve for those living on the fringe of the lowlands population and looking to escape the Spanish yoke. Deep *barrancas* (ravines) and steep precipices defied military incursion, and fiercely independent highlanders rejected Catholic evangelism and mission settlements. Outlaws, refugees, rebels, and runaway slaves, along with Cora, Huichol, and Tepehuan Indians, congregated in small *serrano* (mountain) communities outside Spanish control until the early eighteenth century. For the lowlands, the presence of these mountain settlements had important consequences. Cora migrants who settled in the tierra caliente for work could easily maintain contact with their serrano families, and reinforce religious and cultural traditions by visiting shrines and participating in ritual in the highlands. At the same time, the constant threat of flight into the hills forced colonial authorities to loosen their grip on the king's subjects. Many migrants were likely unaccustomed to the rigors of sedentary agriculture. Much like in the Mexican markets of today where the buyer's most effective ploy is to simply walk away, these recently settled lowlanders fled their villages when the demands of bureaucrats and priests became too onerous, and only returned with the promise of compromise.

Racial Change and Pueblo Politics along the Frontier of the Sierra, 1524–1814

[10] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 31.

In New Galicia, demographic change was nothing short of dramatic. In the wake of indigenous peoples' near extinction in the sixteenth century, Africans and people of African descent soon formed the majority of the tierra caliente population. In addition, indigenous settlers from outside the region and, ironically, from the highlands repopulated the foothills to the east and west of the Sierra del Nayarit as border guards meant to contain the "barbarous Indians." Not even the Sierra itself was insulated from drastic population change, as refugees from various rebellions drifted into the mountains and there joined other runaways of all sorts. In spite of these changes, however, the entire region retained an "Indian" structure. *Pueblos de indios*, those colonial institutions designed to contain indigenous populations and streamline tribute collection, did not give way to racially indistinct hacienda settlements or military presidios on a large scale. On the contrary, descendants of slaves and other settlers freely joined dwindling indigenous reductions and kept them alive through the colonial period. In sum, widespread racial transformation in northwestern New Galicia translated not to cultural demise, but rather rebirth. By the end of the colonial period Indian identity coalesced as much around the legal codes and privileges that defined pueblo status, as the religious and social traditions of the peoples who had populated these towns.

Military impressment and labor, not precious minerals or trade goods, were the spoils of early sixteenth-century conquest in the region that would become New Galicia. Following the successful conquest of the Mexica capital Tenochtitlán, Spanish conquistadors—along with thousands of Tlaxcalan troops—again focused on a region of indigenous concentration in 1524.[11]

[11] For the use of Indian allies in the conquest of the central valley, see Oudijk and Restall, "Mesoamerican Conquistadors in the Sixteenth Century," 31–33. For their use in the conquest of

Unlike the urban metropolis in the central valley, however, along the Pacific littoral an estimated population of 100,000 was dispersed among autonomous agrarian communities.[12] Spanish observers in 1525 distinguished the indigenous inhabitants based upon supposed degrees of civilization, as either high "Naguatatos" or humble "Otomíes," but this characterization likely reflected more the colonizers' experience in the central valley than any actual cultural/linguistic traits.[13] Whatever their differences, in the absence of wealth, labor became their most valuable commodity for the Spanish. After skirmishes with conquistadors Francisco Cortés (Hernán's nephew) and Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, the population hubs of Tepic and Xalisco, along with many surrounding villages, acceded to Spanish rule by the early 1530s. Many inhabitants were promptly press-ganged into military service for conquests as far north as Mazatlán, under the *encomienda* regime.[14] Under this system, the Crown entrusted a conquistador with a certain number of indigenous souls to bring to the Catholic fold, who in return could demand tribute and labor. The encomendero received no land under this arrangement, which presupposed an indigenous population large enough to satisfy each conquistador's needs and wants, and those of his family, as well.[15] The entire region had been divided into *encomiendas* for Guzmán's subordinates by the mid sixteenth century.[16]

New Galicia, see Altman, "Conquest, Coercion, and Collaboration," 150. For population figures of the tierra caliente, see Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 142.

[12] Ibid., 138.

[13] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 17. Later scholars instead suggest these ethnic groups spoke a variety of Cora and Huichol, respectively; Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 138.

[14] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 12–14, 42–43.

[15] Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 58.

[16] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 68–81. For a list of all encomiendas in Tepic, see Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 139–141.

Yet such exploitation was not to last, as demographic collapse hastened the demise of this spoils system by the turn of the century. Paralleling to a greater degree the catastrophic population loss in the central valley, which by the mid sixteenth century had suffered a 75 percent decline, the tributary list for the tierra caliente region of New Galicia plummeted 97 percent to just past 3,000 in the same period.[17] Ninety percent of the population of Xalisco, a major pre-Hispanic indigenous center, had disappeared by the end of the 1500s. Epidemic disease, migration, and grueling exploitation brought inhabitants from an estimated 3,000 to 250.[18]

Changes in Spanish colonial administration reacted to this ever-diminishing labor pool. Although Guzmán first established the seat of New Galicia in 1532 on the present-day site of Tepic, thirty years later in 1560 the seat was moved southeast to Guadalajara. Without a substantial indigenous population to govern and draw tribute from, authorities sought a more salubrious and defensible site.[19] Labor collection and distribution also underwent successive changes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Crown legally ended the encomienda system in 1549 and replaced it with a regime more conducive to exploiting the land vacated by the disappearing indigenous inhabitants.[20] This new system was the *repartimiento*, in which indigenous leaders selected a number of residents from each pueblo, and distributed them as laborers among burgeoning Spanish-owned farms, mines, and construction works. But even this was doomed to fail as the labor supply continued shrinking, and in the seventeenth century

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[17] Borah and Cook, "La despoblación del México central," 5; and Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 142.
[18] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 214.
[19] López de Velasco, *Geografía y descripción universal de las Indias*, 268; and Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 189–90.
[20] Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 225–226.

Spanish entrepreneurs and colonial officials looked outside the region to boost the local population.

At first, a profusion of external Indian groups moved into the lowlands and piedmont beginning in the sixteenth century. Colonial authorities relocated indigenous troops from the central valley to the foothills of the sierra in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to fortify the frontier after a series of widespread "Chichimec" rebellions.[21] A Mexica force settled the pueblo of Huejucar in 1561, for instance, and Tlaxcaltecas set up a colony at Colotlán in 1591.[22] Other sixteenth-century settlements on the eastern foothills of the Sierra del Nayarit bear such names as "New Tlaxcala," and legal petitioners from that region explicitly identify themselves as Tlaxcalans into the late eighteenth century, although this may have had more to do with a shrewd use of the honor accorded Tlaxcalan settlers than any actual ethnic heritage, as we shall see.[23] Within a few decades, these communities had accepted in their midst erstwhile enemies, such as the Cazcanes from the 1540 Mixtón War.[24] Evidence for central-valley settlers in the southwestern piedmont is less clear but nonetheless suggestive. Gerhard, for one, claims "new Indians" settled San Luis and Pochotitán on the outskirts of Tepic in the early seventeenth century.[25] Nahuatl (here *mexicano*), the language of the central valley, was the *lingua franca* for small indigenous pueblos in the lowlands by as early as the mid seventeenth century, and as late

[21] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 43–44, 51. For Tlaxcalans sent elsewhere, see McEnroe, "Sites of Diplomacy," 190–191; and Brading and Cross, "Colonial Silver Mining," 558.
[22] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 291.
[23] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Indios, caja 0071, exps. 24, 26–27.
[24] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 76.
[25] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 145.

as 1805 a Franciscan missionary classified the missions north of Tepic as "mexicano."[26] Adding to the mix, as their highland missions failed again and again in the early colonial period, Franciscan friars brought several serrano families to settle in the lowlands, such as loyal Guaynamotecos after a 1638 rebellion.[27]

By 1559 Spanish entrepreneurs were already bringing Africans to the region to work the cattle and wheat haciendas as well as the newly established sugar plantations.[28] Although hacienda records are difficult to come by for this early period, other records indicate that, within a half-century, people of African descent dominated the lowland population. In a tally of baptisms in Tepic from the first three decades of the eighteenth century, "mulattos" and "slaves" comprised 41 percent of those for whom race was recorded. "Spaniards" and "Indians" each constituted roughly 25 percent.[29] A census of the Guadalajara Intendancy conducted from 1789–1793

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[26] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 6, exp. 1, folios 1–9; and AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Misiones, Vol. 2, exp. 18, folios 200–201. *Cf.* de la Torre, *Vicarios en entredicho*, 287; and Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 91. It must be noted that missionary evangelization efforts typically included instruction in Nahuatl, and this may account for "mexicaneros" in the Franciscan towns, as Laura Magriñá points out in *Los coras*, 27.
[27] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 112. For further examples of this sort of settlement, see de la Mota, *Historia de la conquista*, 319; and McCarty and Matson, "Franciscan Report," 217.
[28] De Toral, "Carta de Fray Francisco de Toral," 139. *Cf.* López González, *La población de Tepic*, 20; and Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 142. At least five sugar mills appear in early-eighteenth-century Church records from the tierra caliente, including one owned by the Jesuits based in Guadalajara; FHC, Xalisco, Bautismos, 1708–1767, Family History Library INTL, film 707085, compilation of baptismal records from years 1708–1710, 1719–1720, 1729–1730. As for the slave trade, during the colonial period, Gónzalo Aguirre Beltrán estimates a total of 200,000 African slaves were imported into Mexico, with over half that figure brought in before 1650; "The Slave Trade in Mexico," 431; and *La población negra de México*, 199–222. David M. Davidson dissects that figure and finds 15,000 slaves were imported in the region "north and west of Mexico City," which would include Tepic, for use in silver mines and livestock ranches; "Negro Slave Control," 237.
[29] FHC, Xalisco, Bautismos, 1708–1767, Family History Library INTL, film 707085, compilation of baptismal records from years 1708–1710, 1719–1720, 1729–1730.

echoed these figures.[30] It must be noted that census-takers did not include tribute-paying Indians in the late-eighteenth-century count, and at least a few Indians were paying tribute in Tepic by 1797.[31] Nonetheless, while some censuses showed the indigenous population climbing up from its nadir through the eighteenth century, "indios" of the late colonial period were not the Cora, Huichol, and Tlaxcalteca of the 1500s.[32] In a 1772 census, for instance, an *alcalde mayor* noted with some bitterness that, although his jurisdiction in Tepic was still called an "Indian town, there are only three legitimate [Indians] and the rest, as many as 70, all mulattoes."[33] Closer to the coast, an erstwhile Indian center in the Valle de Banderas was a "mulatto town" by 1760.[34] Along the frontier with the Sierra, a 1788 church census of Jala parish showed those of Indian descent (including mestizos) at 36 percent, while "mulatos," "negros," "lobos," etc. comprised 46 percent.[35] Even the ostensibly Tlaxcalan settlements of the eastern piedmont had residents of African descent in their midst.[36]

In addition to indigenous groups and Africans, Spanish settlers—miners, merchants, hacendados, and day laborers, as well—also came to the area. By the mid eighteenth century, writer Matías Ángel de la Mota Padilla mentions that, despite their continued designation as "Indian pueblos,"

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[30] López González, *La población de Tepic*, 23.
[31] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Tributos, caja 5096, exp. 046.
[32] In the northern Bajío, for instance, by the late seventeenth century census takers were broadly claiming only two racial distinctions—Spanish and "indio"—but "the growing population classed as indio and organized in patriarchal households to sustain commercial production on the bottomlands included not only people of diverse Mesoamerican ancestry but significant numbers (surely 10 percent, perhaps 20) of descendants of African slaves"; Tutino, *Making a New World*, 150–155.
[33] López González, *La población de Tepic*, 20. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish are mine.
[34] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 142.
[35] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 19 August 1788.
[36] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 309, n.2.

towns like Tepic and Ahuacatlán had enough Spanish residents to seek *villa* (Spanish town) status.[37] Perhaps a priest in Santa María del Oro best summarized the ethnic composition of the region at the end of the colonial period, when he bluntly claimed in 1814 there were no longer any "pure" Indians living in his parish, only those "scrambled with mulattoes and Spaniards."[38]

Nor was the Sierra del Nayarit an ethnically monolithic area, and outside groups penetrated the small serrano communities relatively easily. At the time of initial Spanish incursion in the lowlands, Huichol, Tepehuan, and Cora Indians inhabited the Sierra and remained somewhat independent, not forming a broad confederation such as that found in Mexico's central valley.[39] Even the Cora, the largest of the serrano groups, were not politically centralized and instead lived dispersed in *rancherías*, or small communities of one or two families each.[40] Refugees and runaway slaves also lived freely among the indigenous populations. A Jesuit envoy in the early eighteenth century claimed he had spoken with three "Spanish brethren" among the Cora, who told him that, in addition to others scattered in various serrano rancherías, a community of "300 apostates of all colors" was situated in the direction of Tepic.[41] This community could otherwise be termed a *palenque*, or maroon community, although that label was not used here. Highlands groups seemed to be only selectively hostile to intrusion, and welcomed some refugees into their communities.[42]

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[37] *Historia de la conquista*, 546.
[38] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1814, February 28, 1814.
[39] We know comparatively little about the Huichol and Tepehuan during this period, however; this is largely due to the fact that Spanish observers did not often distinguish such groups.
[40] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 49–50.
[41] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 71.
[42] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 55. For an examination of this phenomenon in northern New Spain, see Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*; and Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*.

To put it simply, within a few decades after the mid-sixteenth-century pacification of the tierra caliente and the foothills of the Sierra del Nayarit, outside peoples and cultures flowed in to the region on a massive scale. While these groups at first retained distinctive cultural and social traits—recall the "Naguatato" and "Otomí" characterization of the Tepic-Xalisco region in the 1520s—these would soon fade. By the end of the colonial period, the population had intermixed to such a degree that the salient distinction, the only distinction that mattered to colonial officials, was that of Spaniards and everyone else.

Indeed, pueblos de indios in the lowlands, along the foothills of the Sierra del Nayarit, and in the highlands were hardly "closed corporate peasant communities."[43] In the case of the former two zones, rather than barring outsiders from holding communal land and serving in religio-political office, these towns fully integrated certain newcomers in their midst. Beyond race mixture, colonial officials worried about the impacts of this relatively free movement of colonial subjects on labor, taxation, and security. First, clerics and *hacendados* (hacienda owners) fought over control of indigenous labor in their missions and estates. Second, an unstable population meant unstable income: as tributaries fled for towns or missions that were exempt from the head tax, their annual payments disappeared with them. Third and perhaps most significantly for some colonial officials, fugitives from justice or coercive labor found, and founded, many towns of refuge where they could blend into the local populace and escape authorities.

[43] Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities," 2, 4.

A late eighteenth century case offers an example of these issues at play. In 1793, Fray Manuel Villarino notified Guadalajara's Real Audiencia of some fugitives from his mission of Atonalisco. The Franciscan friar had just returned from Tepic to the south, only to find 11 of his charges had fled for distant points in his absence: five to the pueblo of Pochotitán, and six to the Hacienda de San Nicolás in Senticpac's jurisdiction.[44] The five in Pochotitán were *soldados flecheros* (soldiers armed with bow and arrow) who apparently took advantage of their military service outside the mission to escape.[45] They were on their way to the highlands mission of Guaynamota, on patrol around the port of San Blas, when they slipped away.[46] As Fr. Villarino explained to the Audiencia members, Indians found freedom irresistible, and this liberty was becoming more attainable every day as there was no shortage of those who "patronized and protected" them.[47] In this and a subsequent letter to Field Marshal Jácobo de Ugarte y Loyola in Tepic, Villarino spread his blame wide: the subdelegado of Santa María del Oro—of which jurisdiction Pochotitán was part—refused to hand over the Indians, and instead sent them along to reside in San Luis, a nearby town. The Santa María del Oro parish priest, meanwhile, looked on and took no action.[48] Furthermore, when Villarino sent four flecheros and the Atonaliscan *alcalde* (political official) to the Hacienda de San Nicolás, the estate administrator scared them

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[44] BPEJ, Real de Audiencia, Ramo Civil, caja 368, exp. 3, prog. 5507, año 1793.
[45] Such soldiers formed troops of archers, commonly found in the Indian foothill towns of the Sierra del Nayarit. See below for further discussion.
[46] This is not to be confused with the Guaynamota found northwest of Tepic, which was secularized in the mid eighteenth century. Gerhard claims that *doctrina* was secularized "in the 1750s," in *The North Frontier*, 142. In an 1822 letter, however, chaplain Ygnacio Gudiño y Monroy refers to the "first priest" who served in Guainamota in 1764; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Guainamota, caja 1, 2 January 1822.
[47] BPEJ, Real de Audiencia, Ramo Civil, caja 368, exp. 3, prog. 5507, año 1793.
[48] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 5, folio 6. Ugarte y Loyola seems to have been generally interested in preserving indigenous communities. In 1790, serving as *comandante* in the northern reaches of New Spain, he ordered the erection of a "controlled market" to better regulate grain distribution and forestall price manipulation; Radding, *Wandering Peoples*, 97.

off with a saber. The recriminations came quickly. The Santa María del Oro subdelegado claimed he had nothing to do with the fugitives' disappearance, and instead accused Villarino of frightening off his charges through abuse. The San Nicolás administrator, meanwhile, gathered multiple witnesses to prove he did not abuse his own Indian workers.[49]

On one level, this entire affair revolved around indigenous labor. In his appeal to the field marshal, Villarino claimed he was especially seeking the return of four of the runaways, whom he had raised and indoctrinated at his own expense and who now served the mission. One in particular served as sacristan.[50] The fact that Villarino sent his second appeal to a military commander and not a civilian official suggests he thought a field marshal would find the loss of soldados flecheros more compelling than the Real Audiencia did, for instance. As for the Santa María del Oro priest and subdelegado, it is possible they were innocent in this matter. Yet even if they were, a growing population was always welcome for the service it offered. And if a newcomer was already trained as a sacristan, all the better. For his part, it should come as little surprise the hacienda administrator would resort to violence to prevent any workers from leaving the estate. Similar battles over indigenous labor between missionaries and hacendados were endemic in Mexican frontier regions during the early colonial period.[51]

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[49] Ibid., folio 5; and BPEJ, Real de Audiencia, Ramo Civil, caja 368, exp. 3, prog. 5507, año 1793.
[50] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 5, folio 1f.
[51] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 192–93. But as Gibson points out, the mendicant orders' complaints against hacendados' coercive labor practices had subsided in the central valley by the end of the sixteenth century, when the mendicants themselves relied on Indian labor to further their own operations; *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 112.

But on another level, colonial authorities were more concerned with the broader implications of free movement for colonial society and criminal justice. Even as the fate of the Atonalisco fugitives falls away from the documentary record, officials still fired off letters in 1796, three years after the case began. That year, field marshal Ugarte received another note regarding local escapees, this time from the Tepic procurator.[52] As the procurator wrote,

> "For many years I have observed that the native Indians of [Tepic] (whom today are very few) adopt mulattoes, blacks, and slaves as sons of the town—as well as some Indians who, perhaps fugitives from their natal pueblos, appear here—without verifying why they were estranged from their pueblo, their customs, their manners. [These new sons] then are like the native Indians, that by becoming participants in the privileges and common opportunities that the laws dispense to those natives, the natives mix with them (occasionally alienating those whom they do not wish to accommodate), electing them not a few times as alcaldes, regidores, and other employees of the República…"[53]

The procurator continued to warn that new pueblos de indios could take root with only two or three *cacique* families, as the few families then agglomerated enough people of African descent and "foreign" Indians to fulfill the resident quota and thus acquire communal territory and

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[52] The procurator, Antonio Herze Ybarreta, seems to have been a local notable. He appeared as an assessor in a 1793 audit of the Tepic cofradías; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Tepic, caja 1, carpeta 9 Dec. 1793. Furthermore, he purchased the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe mine in the Real de Caramota, near Santiago Ixcuintla, in 1797; AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Minería, caja 5693, exp. 008.

[53] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 5, folio 10. NB: "Sons of the pueblo," or *hijos del pueblo*, was a common way of referring to Indian residents of pueblos; Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 312, n.28.

relative political autonomy.[54] Thus, instead of one region of refuge in the distant Sierra, the lowlands could be dotted with multiple safe havens for those wishing to "hide their crimes," or escape tributary service.[55]

Although the Tepic procurator did not mention a possible uprising, fear of the "black element" in Nayarit was undoubtedly on his mind. By the time he wrote his letter in 1796, the Haitian Revolution—the bloody slave revolt that would ultimately leave France bereft of its most profitable colony in the Western Hemisphere—had been underway for five years. Many colonies across Spanish America tightened restrictions on slave populations as a result.[56] Nevertheless, little would be done. The Tepic field marshal Ugarte decried this situation and told the procurator to remain vigilant, but he promised no aid.[57] The Spanish Crown and its agents in the colony had long paid lip service to prohibiting miscegenation and preventing the offspring of mixed unions from residing in Indian communities, but when it came to actual implementation, compromise reigned.[58]

Wealth and Warfare on the Northern Frontier

In the broader colonial context, dozens, even hundreds of criminal fugitives and runaway slaves were of little concern when compared to the financial and logistical boon of maintaining good

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[54] In order to be denominated "pueblo de indio" during the colonial period, a settlement needed at least 80 families; Tavárez, "república de indios."
[55] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 5, folio 10.
[56] For an example of the widespread impact the Haitian uprising had on Spanish American politics, see Helg, *Liberty and Equality*.
[57] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 5, folio 11.
[58] Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 147.

relations with frontier pueblos overseeing security in a mining region. And that security was deemed necessary, for hand in hand with the expansion of mining, agriculture, and livestock-raising came increased aggression from indigenous groups and African slaves not yet willing to accede to Spanish authority. Furthermore, whereas the conquest of the central valley was accomplished in a brief three years, the pacification of the northern frontier stretched on for decades with mounting financial costs and casualties.

Despite the enormity of Tenochtitlán—in 1519, the Aztec capital held 150,000 to 200,000 inhabitants; in contrast, Seville in 1533 contained 55,000—as well as its dazzling markets and tributary wealth, the sparsely populated northern Bajío region soon eclipsed the central valley in terms of resource extraction for the new colony.[59] From 1560 to 1685, workers mined and refined 25,000 to 30,000 tons of silver from Spanish America. They produced more than double that amount from 1685 to 1810.[60] To put this figure in context, by the turn of the seventeenth century, gold and silver bullion exports from the colony already comprised 80 percent of New Spain's total exports by value.[61] And this bounty came almost exclusively from "a 1000 km band of Mexican territory stretching north-west from Pachuca to Santa Barbara," encompassing Zacatecas, Guanajuato, and Sombrerete.[62]

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[59] José Luis de Rojas offers a comprehensive look at the multiple sources for these figures, as well as scholars' formulas involved in estimating the population, in "Cuantificaciones referentes a la ciudad de Tenochtitlán," 217–226.
[60] Bakewell, *Mines of Silver and Gold*, xvii.
[61] Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 6. As Peter Bakewell succinctly explains, "[i]n no other world area from 1450 to 1800 did Europeans directly organize mining (or, for that matter, indirectly stimulate it through trade) on so large a scale as in Latin America"; in *Mines of Silver and Gold*, xxii.
[62] Ibid., xv.

The mining society that developed in this region was truly a "new world."[63] As was discussed above, Spanish development in the center-south of the colony initially overlaid pre-Hispanic indigenous settlements, and political administration took its cue from a Nahua template.[64] Even Spanish conquest followed indigenous patterns in that region.[65] In contrast, the north was rich with silver, not Indians.[66] Settlers clustered around mining camps and their hinterland, and developed roads to facilitate bullion transport south to the mint in Mexico City. As in the region around Tepic, any indigenous population subjugated and coerced into providing labor quickly died off or fled, and the northern mines were overwhelmingly staffed by wage laborers by the end of the sixteenth century.[67]

Yet not all indigenous groups were so handily pushed aside. In the wake of Guzmán's bloody march northwest of Mexico City in the mid 1530s and the brutal exploitation that indigenous groups subsequently endured from encomenderos, many such groups in this northern region launched the Mixtón War in 1540. Rebels at first came from the eastern flank of the Sierra Madre. Although accounts differ, settlements of subjugated Cazcanes were the first to begin vacating their pueblos and fortifying mountainous outcroppings called *peñoles*, either in concert with or at the behest of the still-independent Zacatecos to the north. Notably, at this early stage many indigenous *principales* (elders) in the vicinity rejected Cazcan envoys, remaining loyal to

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[63] Tutino, *Making a New World*, 32.
[64] Charles Gibson and James Lockhart have exhaustively detailed this phenomenon in, respectively, *The Aztecs Under Colonial Rule*; and *The Nahuas After the Conquest*.
[65] Oudijk and Restall, "Mesoamerican Conquistadors," 42–56.
[66] Paraphrasing Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 1.
[67] While the mines nearer the central valley relied upon a greater proportion of drafted Indian labor, free wage-earners comprised nearly all of the workers in Zacatecas; Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 8. Moreover, Brading finds that "mine-workers constituted a labor aristocracy, characterized by lavish spending and geographical mobility," by the eighteenth century; Brading and Cross, "Colonial Silver Mining," 558.

even the notoriously brutal encomenderos of New Galicia—such as Xalisco under Cristóbal de Oñate—and warning their overlords.[68] Without clear evidence of the strength of indigenous rebels, Xalisco Indians undoubtedly preferred exploitation to possible extermination. But by late 1540, Spanish conquistadors and their indigenous allies had suffered multiple defeats. Most significantly, the unsuccessful Spanish siege of the main rebel redoubt Nochistlán became a rallying point for thousands more indigenous fighters.

In many ways, the Mixtón War represented the turning point for the early colony, when the flush of first conquest began to pale in the face of prolonged violent resistance to colonial rule. And nothing symbolized the end of this era better than the death of Pedro de Alvarado, the conquistador who, two decades before, initiated hostilities with the Aztecs of Tenochtitlán. Alvarado was the first to respond to calls for help from Guadalajara after rebels broke the siege at the peñol Mixtón. In a likely apocryphal warning found in historian Mota Padilla's account of the war, encomendero Cristóbal de Oñate explained to Alvarado,

> "…you do not know those [Indians] of this Kingdom of Galicia. In New Spain there are cities, towns, workshops, and the Indians have goods to defend; in New Galicia, the Indians are, as you say, 'little cats,' in that if we draw them down from one mountain, they ensconce themselves in another; they become indomitable and leave us empty-handed, without capturing a single prisoner…"[69]

[68] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 145. For a report of Oñate's harsh rule, see Ibid., 74–77.
[69] Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 165.

Grossly underestimating these "little cats," Alvarado rushed headlong to Nochistlán and attacked the peñol there. Despite his force of 200 Spaniards and "several thousand" indigenous allies, rebels overwhelmed Alvarado and, in the heat of retreat, he fell under his horse and was crushed.[70] He died in Guadalajara within days. Revolt soon spread to communities as distant as Cuitzeo south of Guadalajara, and Ahuacatlán, Jala, and other towns near Compostela in the west. In late September, some 15,000 indigenous rebels laid siege to Guadalajara, some waving banners made from the habits they had stripped off Franciscan missionaries.[71] Colonial authorities were horrified at the prospect of losing western Mesoamerica, and perhaps the entire colony should indigenous groups everywhere begin to rebel.

[70] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 147.
[71] Ibid., 151; and Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 165.

Figure 1: La caída de Pedro de Alvarado[72]

The flatland surrounding Guadalajara was not the easily defensible peñol of the north, however, and Spanish cavalry was able to break the siege. Within a month, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza himself arrived in New Galicia at the head of 30,000 indigenous allies collected in the central valley, Michoacán, and Colima.[73] Losing momentum after the unsuccessful siege of Guadalajara

[72] This panel is the second of a pentaptych in the Palacio Municipal de Guadalajara, painted by Gabriel Flores in 1963. The looming figure in the background is the Mixtón leader Tenamaztle. The underground figures are representative of indigenous deities, ushering the dying Pedro Alvarado into the underworld—note the owl, a symbol of death, in the lower left corner. All photographs by the author.
[73] Altman, *The War for Mexico's West*, 165.

and in the face of overwhelming colonial forces, the Mixtón rebels fell to Mendoza's forces in early 1542. The viceroy's men carried back more than 3,000 rebels to the central valley, where soldiers enslaved them. Other rebels were granted full amnesty and returned to their pueblos in order to continue providing labor to encomenderos, such as those in Iztlán, Ahuacatlán, and Mezpan.[74] But as colonial officials would soon discover, it would take more than military might to truly restore peace.

With the introduction of silver mines—along with their attendant agriculture and livestock haciendas, and defensive presidios—the Mixtón War proved to be merely the first battle in "the longest and most expensive conflict between Spaniards and the indigenous peoples of New Spain in the history of the colony."[75] From 1550 to 1590, still-unconquered indigenous groups of the Bajío, along with the Mixtón rebels still at large, battled settlers and presidio soldiers in what became known as the Chichimec War. For their part, nomadic and semi-nomadic indigenous raiders found the extensive network of roads, connecting the mines to the north with agricultural hubs and Mexico City to the south, a tempting target.[76] The response was "war by fire and blood," as Spaniards and their Indian auxiliaries killed or enslaved Chichimec men, women, and children encountered in punitive campaigns.[77] Trafficking Chichimec slaves, in fact, was "the

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[74] Ibid., 290–291, n.86; and 180.
[75] Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society*, 22. For a broader description of the early interplay between Spanish entrepreneurs, political officials, and indigenous groups of the Bajío, see Tutino, *Making a New World*, 77–86.
[76] For a detailed overview of the construction of this road and its dangers, see Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver*, 16–32.
[77] For Spanish counter-guerrilla tactics, see Ibid., 109–111. For the use of Indian allies, see Ibid., 158–171. Powell finds the Chichimeca groups were ultimately absorbed into the northward advance of Otomíes, Tarascans, Cholultecans, Tlaxcalans, and Cazcanes defeated in the Mixtón War. Although much is made of the Chichimeca War's distinction—an interminable guerrilla war that ended with negotiation versus the outright subjugation of the central valley in 1519–

main answer to the problem of soldier recruiting" in this period.[78] In a brutal cycle, underpaid soldiers embarked upon slaving raids in order to supplement poor wages, and these raids, in turn, provoked further hostilities from northern indigenous groups, justifying the soldiers' continuing presence on the frontier. As the war dragged on, this cycle continued over a broader territory, spreading from coast to coast and including Sinaloa in the west and Pánuco in the east.[79] Even Guaynamotecos in the Sierra del Nayarit razed the Franciscan mission and murdered the friars in their territory in 1585.[80] In response, the Guadalajara Audiencia sent a troop north that enslaved more than 1,000 people, and executed over a dozen rebel leaders.[81]

But at the end of the sixteenth century, a series of new viceroys reversed this longstanding policy of rule by force. War was costly and interminable. After 60 years of violence, these colonial rulers ended the war in the Bajío and northern New Galicia with compromise. They prohibited Indian slavery, freed captives, signed peace treaties, and withdrew soldiers.[82] Furthermore, they converted former enemies into allies. The case of Yanga, a maroon community in Veracruz, serves as an early example of the transformation that would soon occur in the distant Sierra del Nayarit, as well.[83] After surviving two military assaults meant to return them to slavery, Yanga residents appealed to Viceroy Luis de Velasco (the younger) for official town status in 1609. Specifically, they sought a *cabildo* (town council) and Spanish *justicia mayor*, as well as a

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21—in this sense, it shares much in common with that earlier conquest. Indigenous groups of the central valley banded together under Spanish direction and defeated an old foe.

[78] Ibid., 111; and Bakewell, *Silver Mining*, 32.

[79] Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver*, 110.

[80] Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 312.

[81] Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver*, 186.

[82] Bakewell, *Silver Mining*, 34–35.

[83] The following details concerning the palenque Yanga come from Davidson, "Negro Slave Control," 246–250.

church funded by the Crown and administered by Franciscan friars. In return, Yanga residents agreed to return all runaways who joined the community after September 1608, and would continue to track and return fugitive slaves in the area for a fee. Velasco, the viceroy who ordered the last military assault and subsequently approved the terms of peace, was the same man responsible for implementing the diplomacy that ended the Chichimec War only two decades before. In some ways, the treaty with Yanga is a hybrid of the agreements Velasco engineered with both the northern indigenous groups and the Tlaxcalans he sent to guard them. As with the Chichimec rebels, Franciscan evangelization formed a key component of settlement, and as with the Tlaxcalans, yanguicos were obliged to keep the peace and act as a rural police force. After the bloody years of the mid to late sixteenth century, this early-seventeenth-century compromise set the precedent for governance of the frontiers for much of the remainder of the colonial period: essentially, rule by the unruly.

The Nature of Compromise, pt. 1: Military Service

As colonial authorities learned the costs of war and the rich rewards of relative security, it became clear that farming out military duties even to erstwhile rebels was worth their while. And to a large degree, frontereños complied with those duties. Too much can be made of frontereño autonomy and resistance to colonial rule. It is far more important to emphasize that frontereños chose to remain within the colonial system. As time passed, they became more comfortable adhering to Spanish legal, agrarian, and religious conventions than functioning in open rebellion. Indeed, rebellion became yet another bargaining tool to arrive at compromise with authorities, rather than a method by which to escape the colony altogether.

In the northern mining regions, frontier pueblos were those situated along the limits of "reduced" territory, or areas where colonial (typically clerical) authorities had concentrated dispersed indigenous populations into communities for easier governance. In the region under study, the Sierra del Nayarit was the untamed wilderness, and frontier pueblos huddled on its western, southern, and eastern boundaries. As we have seen, migrants frequently formed these settlements, such as the Tlaxcalan troops Viceroy Mendoza brought with him to quell the Mixtón rebels, reduced *serrano* families, or the omnipresent fugitives from cities or haciendas. Officials occasionally label these communities *pueblos fronterizos* in colonial records. Sometimes authorities would assign an entire area a distinctive moniker, such as the Fronteras de Colotlán along the eastern border of the Sierra del Nayarit. Other times, such pueblos are only distinguished in the records by the privileges afforded them, such as exemption from tribute, or self-identification from frontereños themselves, as *soldados* or *militares fronterizos*, or simply *flecheros*. These communities occupied a juridical middle ground between presidios and tributary pueblos. Paid soldiers staffed the former, and the latter provided annual tribute to the Crown, whether in silver or in kind. Spanish authorities oversaw clusters of pueblos fronterizos, such as the *capitán protector* of the Fronteras de Colotlán, or the *mariscal de campo* of Tepic. Residents of pueblos fronterizos still provided service and food to Catholic clergy as did other tributary pueblos, but annual tribute was replaced with intermittent military service.

The principal mandates of frontier pueblos were simple: defend the colony from attack, and support the Catholic faith. In addition to marching in occasional patrols, able-bodied residents functioned as an auxiliary infantry, designated for or coerced into duty in response to various

crises.[84] As in the sixteenth century military campaigns, this auxiliary troop could also be called upon to perform manual labor, such as constructing an altar in the Sierra del Nayarit for Jesuit missionaries during a 1721 expedition.[85] They did not wear Spanish armor, and their principal weapon was the bow and arrow, although some used harquebuses later in the eighteenth century.[86] The pueblos of the Fronteras de Colotlán fell under the *fuero militar*, or military legal jurisdiction, but this privilege does not seem to have extended to frontereños on the western side of the Sierra.[87] Also, frontereños could be called upon for distant campaigns. Beginning in the early seventeenth century and continuing until the end of the colonial period, flecheros from the eastern foothills ventured out on military campaigns at least once every 15 years or so to quell rebellions, conquer territory, and pursue raiders in the Tierra Adentro more than 300 miles from their pueblos.[88] Meanwhile, frontereños on the western frontier around Tepic, and even residents of certain Tepic *barrios*, performed maneuvers along the Pacific littoral. In a letter to the Real Audiencia de Guadalajara, a Tepic cacique in 1623 described his community's aid in the conquests of Acaponeta, Chametla and Culiacán alongside Nuño de Guzmán, as well as its continuing resistance to pirate invasion at the Pacific ports of Chacala and Matanchel.[89] Several missions and towns continued this coastal defense over the next century and a half.[90]

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[84] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 99–100, 125.
[85] Ibid., 108.
[86] Ibid., 114, 132; and Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 292.
[87] Ibid.; and AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, legajo 13, volumen 37, exps. 22 and 25.
[88] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 293.
[89] Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 522.
[90] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 65, vol. 260, exp. 10; and Ibid., Legajo 23, volumen 70, exp. 6, folios 119–120. For further discussion of their role, see below.

The literature on the highlands region is divided between those who view the Spanish incursion as a definitive conquest, and those who disregard it as ineffectual. On one hand, writers like Mota Padilla, cited above, and the Jesuit historian José de Ortega only begin their histories of the highlands region in 1722, the date of Spanish pacification. In these accounts, the early eighteenth-century events represent a much belated "conquest." Spanish mercenaries and their indigenous allies achieved a resounding military victory that effectively placed the region under colonial authority once and for all. It was only delayed in Nayarit by both ineffective Franciscan evangelization and hostile natives.[91]

On the other hand, revisionist historians largely stand at the opposite end of the spectrum, practically writing out any significant pacification or reduction from the history of the Sierra. In their view, Spanish occupation was temporary and without lasting effect.[92] As Laura Magriñá points out, the Cora had "a total of no more than 90 years of direct contact with the Catholic religion, over a period of more than 450 years."[93] Such a small window permitted the Cora only enough time to superficially graft Catholic form onto pre-Hispanic religious content. By emphasizing either total change or total continuity during the 1700s, however, both viewpoints miss the mark.

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[91] Mota Padilla inserted an *apologia* for Bourbon secularization into his own account of the Nayarit conquest, emphasizing the Franciscans' failure to adequately subdue a people that only guns and the politically connected secular Church could handle; *Historia de la conquista*, 511. *Cf.* de la Torre, *Vicarios en entredicho*, 266.
[92] Warner, for instance, claims present-day Cora have no collective memory of the 1722 event; "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 122.
[93] Magriñá, *Los coras*, 16.

First, an emphasis on violent change obscures the otherwise peaceful interaction the tierra caliente and the Sierra had long enjoyed. Thomas Hinton suggests the Cora freely incorporated many of the trappings of the Spanish economy prior to 1722, in a process he terms "pre-conquest acculturation."[94] Indeed, in one late-seventeenth-century account, Franciscan friar Antonio Arias mentions "about a thousand sheep and the same number of cattle" in one Cora ranchería, as well as pack mules and horses for trade.[95] While raiding certainly supplied some of this livestock, trade between the mountains and the coast was relatively common.[96] Serrano Indians frequently carried honey, beeswax, and fruit to exchange for salt, fish, and cloth.[97] As Arias continued, "[i]n less than one day, they can be in contact. Many people live with one foot on this land and the other in the sierra."[98] Highland dwellers also descended the eastern side of the sierra for work in the mines of Zacatecas as early as the seventeenth century, a practice that continued at least into the late eighteenth, according to Franciscan reports.[99]

Moreover, the sierra held important pilgrimage sites for Cora in both regions. In his 1679 report, Bishop Juan de Santiago y León Garabito decried such religious intermingling. As he explained,

> "…the gentiles of Nayarit descend to the Christian pueblos of the tierra caliente, deal and engage with them, and as a result a large portion of the pueblos has remained attached to

[94] Hinton, "Pre-Conquest Acculturation," 161–168.
[95] McCarty and Matson, "Franciscan Report," 199.
[96] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 57. Even Ortega, the conquest chronicler, refers to such "innocent" trade in the years prior to 1722, in *Apostólicos afanes*, 74.
[97] Hinton, "Pre-Conquest Acculturation," 164. For an expanded list of trade, see McCarty and Matson, "Franciscan Report," 196.
[98] Ibid., 217.
[99] Hinton, "Pre-Conquest Acculturation," 164; and de la Torre, *Vicarios en entredicho*, 287.

> idolatry… [moreover, they] superstitiously ascend the sierra to the house of the gentiles' idols…"[100]

A Jesuit envoy complemented these sentiments, blaming the convenient refuge of the sierra for the presence of brazen apostasy in lowland towns such as Tepic.[101] Not all exchange was unwelcome. When troops entered the sierra following the 1616 Tepehuan rebellion, for instance, one northern Cora leader "offered to enlist himself and his subjects … among the Catholic [soldiers]."[102] He subsequently declined to harbor fleeing Tepehuan rebels and offered Cora troops to aid in their pacification, as well as granted personnel to take part in the activities at the church and convent of nearby Guazamota.[103] A little over three decades later, Bishop Juan Ruiz Colmenero wrote a letter to this "bárbaro infiel" in the Sierra, demanding he cast out any "apostates" (here, runaway mission residents) he may have been harboring.[104] Don Francisco Nayarit replied in a letter penned in Nahuatl, reminding the bishop of his earlier service and adding that another convent was planned for Huajicori "where all of my subjects shall serve the king in his house."[105] Even the fact this extraordinary exchange took place betrays the existence of "go-betweens," or messengers familiar enough with each region to successfully interact with each.

And second, military incursion and settlement also had significant repercussions for both the mountainous zone and the colony beyond. Serrano groups occasionally lashed out at Spanish

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[100] De Santiago, "Carta del obispo de Guadalajara…" 87–88.
[101] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 71.
[102] Ibid., 31.
[103] Ibid., 31. *Cf.* McCarty and Matson, "Franciscan Report," 197.
[104] Delarrosa, "Entrada del obispo de Guadalajara," 82.
[105] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 105–106.

authority, which, in turn, vindicated the presence of and compromises with the pueblos fronterizos. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, the most important theater of operations for all frontier pueblos in this region was the Sierra del Nayarit, both before and after the ostensible conquest of the highlands in 1722. At first glance, however, it is unclear why this should be so. As discussed above, despite persistent trouble in Guaynamota from the mid sixteenth century to a final rebellion in 1638, a policy of *détente* developed between many serrano communities and colonial officials through the seventeenth century.[106] To be sure, the Sierra continued to absorb fugitives and apostates, and clerics frequently commented on this thorn in their side.[107] Nonetheless, aside from a few attempted missions, both Spanish and frontereño activity in the Sierra was apparently kept to a minimum until a disastrous expedition in 1701 kicked off decades of military activity in the mountains. What changed at the turn of the century? Warner suggests the persistent worries of apostates and fugitives finally reached a critical point.[108] Nonetheless, it is unclear when that point was reached. The Crown ordered the reduction of the Sierra as early as 1677, following a Franciscan *visita* that uncovered, among other worrisome developments, a palenque named La Marca and composed of "apostate Indians, blacks, and mulattoes."[109] Franciscans subsequently established a few missions in the foothills, but nothing further was done for years. Moreover, the Audiencia de Guadalajara, not the Crown or the

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[106] Fidel de Jesús Chauvet reports Franciscans established the Guaynamota mission in 1569, only to have it sacked two years later in 1571; *Los franciscanos en México*, 58. The 1585 rebellion and its subsequent repression were discussed above. The mission was re-established in 1596 but was again destroyed in 1638, and survivors established the tierra caliente mission of the same name; Ibid.; and Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 112. Warner details this *détente* more fully in his chapter on the pre-1722 Cora; "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 83–121.
[107] For example, see Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 507; Garabito, "Carta del obispo de Guadalajara…", 86; Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 70; McCarty and Matson, "Franciscan Report," 214; and Delarrosa, "Entrada del Obispo," 82.
[108] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 120–121.
[109] Ibid., 113.

viceroyalty, would ultimately call for military incursion.[110] What, specifically, could have inspired a seemingly sudden burst of expeditions?

First, the activity of the eighteenth century may not, in fact, have represented a significant break from those of the seventeenth. It is important to recall the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the Sierra. Trade, circular labor migration, and correspondence between some northern Cora leaders and colonial authorities do not preclude the possibility that other groups sought autonomy and actively opposed any outside intrusion. There is evidence the ill-fated 1701 campaign into the sierra may simply have been one of a series of small-scale expeditions that went unreported in the final decades of the seventeenth century, if not before. In a point not mentioned in later descriptions of the conquest of the Sierra, the 1701 campaign sprang directly from a successful 1695 expedition, in which don Francisco de Bracamonte (presumably together with other soldiers or frontereños) convinced more than 70 apostates to congregate in the mission of Atonalisco that had been abandoned since 1681. Acknowledging this success, the Guadalajara Audiencia granted Bracamonte license in December 1696 to enter the Sierra again, which he did in 1701.[111] This expedition would end in failure as a group of 200 Cora troops killed Bracamonte, along with roughly a dozen other soldiers and their Atonaliscan guide.[112] In addition to the 1695 campaign, there are indications of other maneuvers in the Sierra prior to 1701. Significantly, the Jesuit chronicler Ortega mentions that, in their second ascent into the mountains, Bracamonte's group encountered the ruins of a razed Cora ranchería, destroyed by

[110] Ibid., 124.
[111] AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, volumen 70, exp. 6.
[112] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 44–55.

one don Francisco Berúmen.[113] Ortega says nothing more about Berúmen and professes ignorance of the reason for the destruction. Nevertheless, members of the Berúmen and Bracamonte families seem to have enjoyed some status in Tepic, and regularly appear as land renters and accountants into the nineteenth century.[114] It is possible these families possessed land along the frontier and had a vested interest in attacking perceived serrano raiders, and had done so for some time before 1701. Warner points out that the presence of 200 Cora "warriors" suggests the involvement of multiple rancherías.[115] It is likely serrano communities had been expecting the invasion.

And second, circumstances outside the Sierra may have impelled the Guadalajara Audiencia to act in order to diversify their silver holdings. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the flagship New Galicia mines of Zacatecas and Sombrerete had been in a slump for a decade.[116] Beyond silver, the province had little profitable enterprise; the commercial and agricultural growth of the eighteenth century was yet to come.[117] And the hope the mountains held untold treasures was as long established as it was undying. According to Warner, the first supposed military incursion into the Sierra in 1566 was, in fact, nothing more than a mining expedition.[118] Rumors of untapped wealth continued to circulate even to the early 1900s, when a former Tepic notary public published an account of an escaped Jesuit living deep in the mountains in the late

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[113] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 46.
[114] For example, both appear in AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 22. Also, a Francisco Berúmen appears in a 1709 baptismal record as godfather to a Spanish girl, the daughter of one doña María Bracamonte, in Tepic; FHC, Xalisco, Bautismos, 1708–1767, Family History Library INTL, film 707085.
[115] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 126.
[116] Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society*, 195.
[117] Van Young, *Hacienda and Market*.
[118] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 96.

eighteenth century, surviving off the fruits of a silver placer mine.[119] In this vein, after receiving reports of a successful expedition to reduce errant apostates in 1695, perhaps the Audiencia felt the time was right to attempt a broader pacification and uncover a fruitful silver mine closer to the Guadalajara seat.

The "Conquest" of the Sierra, 1700–1722

Events after 1701 soon brought the Sierra del Nayarit into the Guadalajara and Mexico City orbits, and consequently much more is known of eighteenth-century activities. Smaller mines had long been established along the perimeter of the mountains, from the mining settlements around Acaponeta in the northwest, to the Real de Chimaltitlán and Acuitapilco directly to the south, and to Tepeque in the east.[120] Following the 1701 expedition, those were in peril when raiders attacked Acaponeta in the north in 1702, and indigenous groups in the Sierra de Tepeque rose up in rebellion that same year. After quelling those uprisings, the Guadalajara Audiencia ordered another expedition, with Capt. Francisco Mazorra leading 100 troops. Ortega does not mention the troops' origin, but it is likely they came from outside the region.[121] Indeed,

> "even though the soldiers bravely penetrated the heights of the foothills, the depths of the ravines, and the deep rivers that guarded the entrance and served as moat and wall to this Province, once they had this Giant in sight, they had to stop upon seeing how its crests were armed with peaks, its slopes with knives, and its twisting ravines with armor… [Capt.

[119] Jáuregui and Magriñá, "Atando cabos," 139–149.
[120] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 71, 145.
[121] Warner claims the soldiers came from the presidio Santo Domingo de Ixcatán, but this is impossible as the presidio was not established until the conquest of the Sierra, in 1721; "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 129.

> Mazorra] convened his council of war, and with the judgment of his most experienced men … resolved to request more forces."[122]

Long gone were the earlier days of conquest, when such a failure would likely have inspired a still larger expedition with a noted conquistador at its head. Instead, with two costly disappointments the will to conquer the Sierra del Nayarit waned as the mines at Zacatecas once again experienced a bonanza in the early eighteenth century, likely due to an increased mercury supply.[123] Military expedition gave way to Franciscan evangelization. The first two attempts ended quickly when it became clear serrano groups were still uninterested in reduction. At the end of what must have been a frustrating *entrada* in 1709, the friars stopped at a river, where one simply shouted the Gospel to a group of Coras on the other side. The Coras, in turn, outshouted the friar.[124]

When the Crown again ordered the reduction of the Sierra in 1709, the Audiencia turned to the northeastern foothills for personnel. Historically, colonial officials and clergy had more success dealing with northern indigenous leaders (recall the correspondence back and forth between don Francisco Nayarit and the Guadalajara prelate in 1649) than their southern counterparts, such as in Guaynamota. The Franciscan friar in charge of this entrada, Antonio Margil de Jesús, appointed two "Indian ambassadors" from Guazamota to penetrate the Sierra and read the royal reduction decree. But unlike in the seventeenth century, in 1711 the northern Cora did not

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[122] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 47–48.
[123] Bakewell, *Silver Mining*, 194.
[124] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 51.

acquiesce to Spanish demands. Margil and another friar managed to speak with a group of 30 Cora troops, but were nonetheless rebuffed.[125] By 1714 the corregidor of Durango was calling for renewed attempts at military conquest.[126]

The Guadalajara Audiencia obliged, but this time opted for local leaders and indigenous troops. In late 1715, the Audiencia sent in hacendado Gregorio Matias de Mendiola, along with 30 Spanish soldiers, 100 indigenous soldiers from Sombrerete, and spiritual support from the Durango bishopric.[127] This expeditionary force peacefully penetrated the Sierra as far as La Mesa del Nayar, an important Cora religious site. But this tour, too, ended without an agreement from the assembled Cora groups. Nevertheless, given the success Mendiola had entering the Sierra, at the end of 1720 another local man was charged with the expedition. Juan de la Torre Valdés y Gamboa was fluent in Nahuatl, and both his father and grandfather had served as *capitanes protectores* of the Fronteras de Colotlán, or the colonial officials at the administrative head of the pueblos fronterizos along the eastern fringe of the Sierra.[128]

Perhaps convinced a show of colonial might and splendor would cow the serranos, de la Torre sent in an indigenous emissary, possibly Huichol, to convince the Cora to negotiate directly with the viceroy.[129] At first, the gambit seemed to be working. The Cora agreed to send their Tonati, or religious leader, to Mexico City in 1721. Occurring a full two centuries after the conquest of

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[125] Ibid., 55–60.
[126] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 135.
[127] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 61–64.
[128] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 143.
[129] Ibid., 144.

the central valley, the representative of an as-yet-unconquered indigenous group caused a stir in the colonial capital.

> "News of the Nayaritas' arrival caused a sensation among the Mexicans, because it did not merely pique the curiosity of the plebes, who ran in droves to see them, but also those upper-class ladies and gentlemen … The news also passed from the home to the cloister, and ignited a burning zeal among many venerable friars and retired priests, who wanted to go and see if they were capable of taming those whom the public called 'wild beasts.'"[130]

Amid this flurry of attention, the Tonati accepted Spanish political rule and selected the Jesuits as his missionaries of choice. However, the weakness of de la Torre's strategy soon became clear when the Cora leader refused baptism. As we have seen above, Cora Indians were not united under a single political head, and discrete rancherías operated relatively independently. The Tonati was merely a ritual leader—more priest than president.[131] Ultimately, he could not convince the other Cora leaders accompanying him of the wisdom of his decision to come under Spanish authority, and he feared their reaction if he were to be baptized.[132] On the return journey, the Tonati fled into the Sierra. Full-scale military assault ensued later that year.

Continuing Insecurity and Consequent Compromise, 1722–1800

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[130] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 82.
[131] Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 145.
[132] Ibid., 150.

After the 1722 incursion, frontier pueblos took over the task of maintaining security in the region.[133] The campaigns to subdue the Sierra fell largely in the domain of the Fronteras de Colotlán. Huejuquilla, Mezquitic, and Guazamota, in particular, garnered special praise for their sons' valor in battle against the northern Cora groups.[134] Nonetheless, although western pueblos went unmentioned in the great chronicles, they played an active role, as well. Four missions surrounding Acaponeta asserted in 1725 they kept the peace along "the coasts of the tierra caliente, cooperating with our services to guard the land, freeing it from the many invasions the Nayares [likely Cora raiders] and pirates attempt by land and sea."[135] And years later in a 1753 property dispute, Pochotitecos reminded the Guadalajara Audiencia they had offered their *canoa* (medium-size boat for cargo transport) for use shuttling troops and matériel across the Río Grande de Santiago during the 1720s campaign.[136]

The 1722 "conquest" was not nearly definitive, and unrest frequently erupted in the Sierra. Ortega mentions continuing defiance around Guaynamota from Tecualmes and apostates.[137] Then, around mid-century a prolonged rebellion broke out, at first under an "yndio general" who claimed to be a descendant of the Tonati—the Cora religious leader who negotiated with the viceroy in 1721. Don Juan de Acuña, as this general was otherwise known, in 1757 seems to

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[133] While colonial authorities established numerous garrisons in the Sierra immediately after pacification, the troops stationed seem to have been ineffective at best. On a general tour of the northern presidios in 1724, Pedro de Rivera complained that the soldiers in Nayarit "were so ignorant of their duties that they did not merit what they earned, nor the title of soldiers." Furthermore, "[t]he garrison was lacking in everything: clothing, food, and supplies for its protection in the event of an enemy attack"; Naylor and Polzer, *Pedro de Rivera*, 72–73.
[134] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 132.
[135] The missions were San Diego, Santa Fe, Cuyután, and San Juan; AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 65, vol. 260, exp. 10.
[136] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 13, vol. 37, exp. 25. See below for further discussion of the case.
[137] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 201–204.

have led a group upset with their treatment at the hands of the Jesuits. At first, authorities chose the path of diplomacy, likely because serrano mission residents frequently lodged complaints against the friars.[138] A royal official stationed in La Mesa was clearly not worried for his safety, as he offered to travel among the rebellious towns and "mend the differences they have between each other and the childish [allegations] they make against their missionary fathers."[139] At the time the official wrote, Acuña's subordinates were on their way to Mexico City to petition on his behalf before royal authorities there.[140] Violence erupted the next year in 1758, however, and one subordinate, Manuel Ygnacio de Oye, continued to raid and plunder until his capture in 1769.[141]

Perhaps most troubling, however, some pueblos fronterizos themselves rebelled against colonial authorities. Blosser points out four occasions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when flecheros from the Fronteras de Colotlán were sent to put down uprisings in neighboring pueblos fronterizos.[142] In another unsettling example, pueblos fronterizos in the Sierra de Tepeque united in opposition to their capitán protector in 1702, hanging him on a cross above Colotlán and shooting him with arrows. Furthermore, they killed an Indian gobernador who had allied with the Spanish official, and expropriated land and livestock from Spanish settlers. Colonial authorities did nothing in response except to declare a general pardon for the rebels. None of the land was

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[138] For example, see AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Judicial, Caja 5171, exp. 006. A later case against a Franciscan friar can be seen in Ibid., Clero Regular y Secular, caja 4314, exp. 011.
[139] Ibid., Misiones, caja 0017, exp. 002, folio 1.
[140] From 1722 onward, the Sierra del Nayarit fell under viceregal jurisdiction as the Provincia de San José del Gran Nayar, Nuevo Reino de Toledo.
[141] Hers, "Los coras," 37–42. Examining a different record, Hers identifies Acuña's subordinate as "Manuel Ignacio Doye."
[142] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 293.

returned to settlers, and the identified leaders went unpunished.[143] Authorities likely feared a pan-Indian revolt in conjunction with a contemporaneous Cora uprising nearby.[144] Such fears were realistic, as serrano groups maintained close links with their pacified neighbors. Years later, during the 1721-22 campaign into the Sierra, an envoy from San Andrés Coamiata reported to expedition leader de la Torre they had been approached by a Cora ambassador to join in resistance against the oncoming Spanish assault. Specifically, the ambassador requested the town capture the Indian official responsible for mustering troops among the pueblos fronterizos, so the Cora could carry him off as a hostage. The envoy from San Andrés further warned that some elders from his town had agreed to carry out the request.[145] Such close cooperation between serrano groups and the towns established to guard them belied any real sense of security in the region. And, as if colonial authorities needed reminding of their precarious hold on the frontier, each time a new capitán protector was appointed to Colotlán, frontereños from the Sierra de Tepeque carried their bloodied cross down to the municipal building in a disturbing show of force that went on for at least 80 years.[146]

Yet frontereños and colonial authorities alike benefited from this arrangement. The crown, for its part, gained access to rich silver deposits tucked away in the Sierra. In the decades after the conquest of the Sierra, the colony extracted real value from frontereño service. Beginning in the late 1740s, the mines at Bolaños (formerly Tepeque) experienced an unprecedented bonanza, due in large part to the stability the pueblos fronterizos maintained. From 1747 to 1761, Bolaños

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[143] This episode comes from Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 307.
[144] The Cora revolt in the Sierra de Tepeque in 1702, according to Warner, was propagated under the leadership of a man named Tzomón, and seems to be distinct from that of the pueblos fronterizos; "An Ethnohistory of the Coras," 128.
[145] Ortega, *Apostólicos afanes*, 99–100.
[146] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 307.

alone produced 2 million pesos a year, totaling 15 percent of Mexican production for that period.[147] The population crested at 16,000 by 1760.[148] Beyond providing silver to royal coffers, however, this success was a boon to regional economies both formal and informal. *Arrieros* (muleteers) from Tepic crossed the Río Grande de Santiago to carry goods to Bolaños, and some observers suggested contraband flowed back—possibly unminted silver, which had a better chance of escape from taxation via the leaky Pacific littoral than through any other land route.[149]

And frontereños, meanwhile, gained powerful leverage in property disputes. During Bolaños's bonanza, a canoa drifted down the Río Grande and became lodged against some rocks just ten leagues from the town of Santiago de Pochotitán. The subsequent case over the ownership of this canoa illustrates well both the value of military service for pueblos fronterizos, and the value these pueblos could bring to colonial authorities. But beyond these, the case demonstrates the precarious status frontereños enjoyed, constantly put to the test to distinguish themselves from the still-barbarous Indians of the Sierra.

In late 1753, a cattle rancher licensed to carry passengers across the river demanded the canoa's return. Don Joseph de Vargas Machuca claimed the boat was his, and that he used it to ferry passengers at the Paso de Álica.[150] Ever since he lost it in a tragic accident that claimed the life of one passenger, however, it had been in the possession of the residents of the pueblo Santiago de Pochotitán. Pochotitecos were now using it to unlawfully transport passengers back and forth at another pass, that of Guaynamota. As Vargas explained through his appointed representative,

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[147] Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 187.
[148] Ibid.; and Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 73.
[149] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 13, vol. 37, exp. 25.
[150] Ibid. The following case between Vargas and the Pochotitecos comes from this expediente.

such an enterprise was harmful to their souls. Rather than viewing Pochotitecos as guardians of the faith, Vargas portrayed them as neophytes constantly in need of clerical guidance and surveillance. The Paso de Guaynamota was far enough from Pochotitán, argued Vargas, it would prevent the ferrymen from receiving regular doctrinal instruction and keeping Catholic precepts. Furthermore, their "innate simplicity," greed, or fear would prevent them from halting illegal traffic, both of "bad people" and contraband. More so than the actual legality of keeping a canoa that had floated downriver to them, Pochotitecos' ethnicity was on trial here.

In response, the "multitude and elders of the Pueblo of Santiago de Pochotitán" reached for the most salient anchor of their identity, or at least one the novogallegan authorities would recognize. They were the "soldados fronterizos closest to the Nayaritas," and sought rights to the canoa based on an argument of public benefit and their service in the conquest of Nayarit. As they argued, and their witnesses later affirmed, the Guaynamota Pass near their town was superior to the Paso de Álica, diminishing the risks of river crossings. Furthermore, Vargas exploited his license, "fishing for *reales*" by placing nets along shallow parts of the river that could serve as fords during the dry season, forcing arrieros to use his boat. Finally, granting them license to use the canoa had precedent: Pochotitecos had a boat-transport license in the 1720s conquest of the Sierra, which they used to transport troops and matériel for the campaign. Helping with Bolaños traffic simply required renewal of that license, not a new license altogether.

Disregarding warnings of contraband and apostasy, the Audiencia president *cum* governor *cum* captain general of New Galicia was swayed by Pochotitecos' arguments in early 1754 and

granted them the license in exchange for a *merced* fee of $20. For pueblos fronterizos, claims of military service still had potent legal effect in the mid eighteenth century, and would continue to help them eke out subsistence and maintain that important distinction from serrano groups until the close of the colonial period. For colonial authorities, the relative stability of the Sierra permitted a late bonanza, and opening different routes between the Real de Bolaños and Tepic allowed traffic to flow more smoothly and kept avaricious civil servants in check.

Next, the case of Atonalisco in the mid-1700s demonstrates well the value of military service in legal disputes, as well as the wide degree of latitude colonial authorities permitted frontereños in affairs along the limits of controlled territory. Beginning in 1755 and dragging on at least to 1787, residents of the Franciscan mission of Atonalisco fought with Tepic confraternities over a ranch in the northern foothills. The first extant salvo came from the Atonaliscans, who hedged their bets by adopting a variety of legal positions. In addition to highlighting their role as "soldados fronterizos de la Sierra del Nayarit," placing themselves among the defenders of Crown and Church, they also pointed to their relatively new status in the colonial order. The town leaders, writing on behalf of their entire community, identified the ranch under dispute as their mission's only site endowed with water and used to "maintain the regular missionary who administers to us," implying the loss of this site threatened their Catholic livelihood. Furthermore, they presented as their witness don Nicolas de Bracamonte, the now blind, "seventy-something" son of the conquistador who successfully reduced the Atonaliscans 60 years before and granted them sufficient pastureland to support their mission.[151] It is unclear whether the Bracamonte family remained patrons of the mission they helped restore, but some

[151] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 22.

relationship apparently remained. The next extant documents come from 1758, when Tepic *cofrades ladinos* (Indian confraternity brothers who had adopted the Spanish language and customs) attempted to outshine the Atonaliscans' military service. Not only were they also on active duty along the coast and in the Sierra, they had ventured out two times less than six months before to assist the highlands comandante in putting down serrano uprisings.[152] At first, the tepiqueños' strategy worked, and they were awarded the land under dispute. The next year in 1759, however, a confraternity official looked on in horror as the frontereños of Atonalisco, "in war formation," put the ranch buildings he was guarding to the torch. In this case, it seems the Atonaliscans' violence reminded colonial authorities how unstable the frontier region remained, and the land was re-measured the next year. Notably, one don Blas de Bracamonte assisted in the measurement. Despite their vociferous complaints to the Guadalajara authorities, tepiqueños lost the land as it was transferred to the mission that year.[153]

By the mid eighteenth century, frontereños had firmly established themselves as defenders of the colonial order. In this they distinguished themselves from the "chichimeca" of the Sierra, their rebellious neighbors of the highlands. Although this differentiation was somewhat spurious, it was a necessary fiction in order to maintain their hard-fought privileges. And colonial authorities accepted this status quo for the most part. Amid the drastic changes the Bourbon Reforms effected on *novohispano* society, here on the frontier of the Sierra del Nayarit was a holdout from the Hapsburg era, a more relaxed system of governance: as long as revenues kept coming

[152] Ibid., Legajo 23, volumen 70, exp. 6, folios 119–120.
[153] AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, volumen 70, exp. 6. It must be noted that, by 1856, the ranch was back in the hands of Tepic confraternities; AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vols. 1–3, folio 915.

in, frontereños could still get away with much.[154] Although not without sacrifice, frontier villages that lent troops to military campaigns—and occasionally fomented insecurity themselves—in turn gained an advantage in legal conflicts with powerful neighbors and retained a high degree of control over local governance and preserved their property. More often than not, such property supported the local cult.[155]

The Nature of Compromise, pt. 2: The Frontier Church, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

Beyond local politics and even exemption from tribute—which did not last beyond a generation or two—the concession colonial authorities granted to frontereños with the most profound impact on daily life, was authority over religious property.[156] By the end of the colonial period a spiritual economy had developed in Nayarit's frontier region, in which support for the Church was exchanged for control over the spending of church funds. This spiritual economy sanctified each community's particular devotion and means of worship, even as priests and bishops would attempt to rein in certain unorthodox practices. Moreover, frontereños simply fled their villages when clergy's demands became too onerous. Violence, it seems, was a negotiating tool reserved

[154] As Susan Deans-Smith explains, "the Spanish Crown's incessant need for revenues in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulted in policies based on expediency. Political bargains were struck with local elites, and bureaucratic offices were sold to raise the badly needed revenues. Spain governed its American possessions through negotiation and compromise…[T]he result of that consensus was the creation of semiautonomous oligarchies, formally subject to Spain's rule, but practically able to attend to their own interests rather than those of the Crown"; *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers*, 5.

[155] For a few examples, see AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 2, exp. 11, folios 60–66; Ibid., Segunda Colección, Legajo 5, vol. 12, exp. 5; Ibid., Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 23.

[156] For tribute exemption, see AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 22. But many frontier residents were paying tribute by the late eighteenth century; AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Tributos, caja 2018, exp. 010; and Ibid., caja 5096, exp. 046.

only for civil authorities and over-reaching landowners. After the initial rejection of evangelization during the Mixtón War, the Church in Nayarit developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through peaceful compromise.

Aside from the secular benefice in the early administrative center of Compostela, the lowlands to the south and west of the Sierra del Nayarit were Franciscan territory through much of the colonial period.[157] The friars minor founded most convents and missions in the mid to late sixteenth century, although they were forced to re-erect some, such as Guaynamota and Jala, after indigenous raiders razed the settlements.[158] Beginning in 1548 when the Vatican erected the Diocese of Guadalajara, all of this territory nominally fell under the jurisdiction of the secular Church hierarchy, but the secular presence was long sporadic and restricted to infrequent tours.[159]

Under Franciscan tutelage, the lowlands and the foothills witnessed miracles and piety. Multiple accounts from that period document the *cruz de zacate* in Tepic, which had at least an elite following by the early seventeenth century.[160] According to popular legend, the "grass cross" was discovered by a livestock hand who, leading his animals across a dusty plain during the dry

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[157] Compostela first had a secular priest until 1540, and then again from 1548 onward; Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 141.

[158] For example, Xalisco received its first permanent crew of missionaries in 1540, Sentispac in 1569. Missionaries came to Yxcuintla much later, in 1604. Jala seems to have been the first to meet destruction when it was razed in 1556 by the "barbarous tribes." For its part, Guaynamota was razed first in 1571, then again in 1585 and 1638; de Jesús, *Los franciscanos en México*, 55, 58.

[159] Gerhad, *The North Frontier*, 91.

[160] A local sugar mill owner constructed a church at the site in 1619, which was expanded and renovated in 1777; López González, *El centro histórico*, 33. For an account of the miracle, see Franciscan friar Antonio Tello's *Crónica miscelanea*.

season, was shocked to see a patch of verdant weeds growing in the shape of a cross. Despite the challenging environment and relic-hungry pilgrims, who constantly removed handfuls of earth at the foot of the cross, the image persisted.[161] The historian Mota Padilla compared this miracle to Our Lady of Guadalupe's appearance at Tepeyac: unlike other such miracles we must accept on faith alone, he explained, with "these two from the Kingdom of New Spain and that of New Galicia … we enjoy and glory in the real and physical existence of the miracle we can see."[162] Likewise, secular and regular observers of the frontier towns "enjoyed and gloried" in the seemingly successful evangelization efforts there. In his 1679 visita of his diocese's northern reaches, for example, Bishop Juan de Santiago Garabito speaks of those "longstanding Christian towns abutting the Nayarit sierra," and subsequently founds a confraternity in one of those towns in order to fund further missionary work in the Sierra.[163] Moreoever, after the Jesuits were expelled in 1767 and Franciscan missionaries inherited their serrano missions, the latter drew a sharp distinction between these isolated Cora reductions and the frontier missions "linked to the coastal economy, whose inhabitants were more disposed to participate in the activities organized by the missionaries."[164]

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[161] Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista*, 256.
[162] Ibid., 258. Mota Padilla also told his readers of St. Matthias's footprints discovered on the road between Tepic and Xalisco, and suggests the holy man may have transformed into the prehispanic deity Pilinszintli through the corruption of time, based on local Indians' description of their deity's teachings; *Historia de la conquista*, 255. This parallels the claim St. Thomas's footprints were "found" in the central valley, and that he became the Mexica deity Quetzalcóatl over time. As such descriptions seem to have had little resonance among worshipers, however, and instead merely reinforced eighteenth-century creole claims to New Spain's greatness, they must be taken with a sizable grain of salt; both Jacques Lafaye and David Brading extensively treat this proto-nationalist myth, in, respectively, *The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness*, and *The First America*.
[163] He establishes the brotherhood in Acaponeta, northwest of Tepic; de Santiago, "Carta del obispo de Guadalajara," 86–87.
[164] De la Torre, *Vicarios en entredicho*, 273.

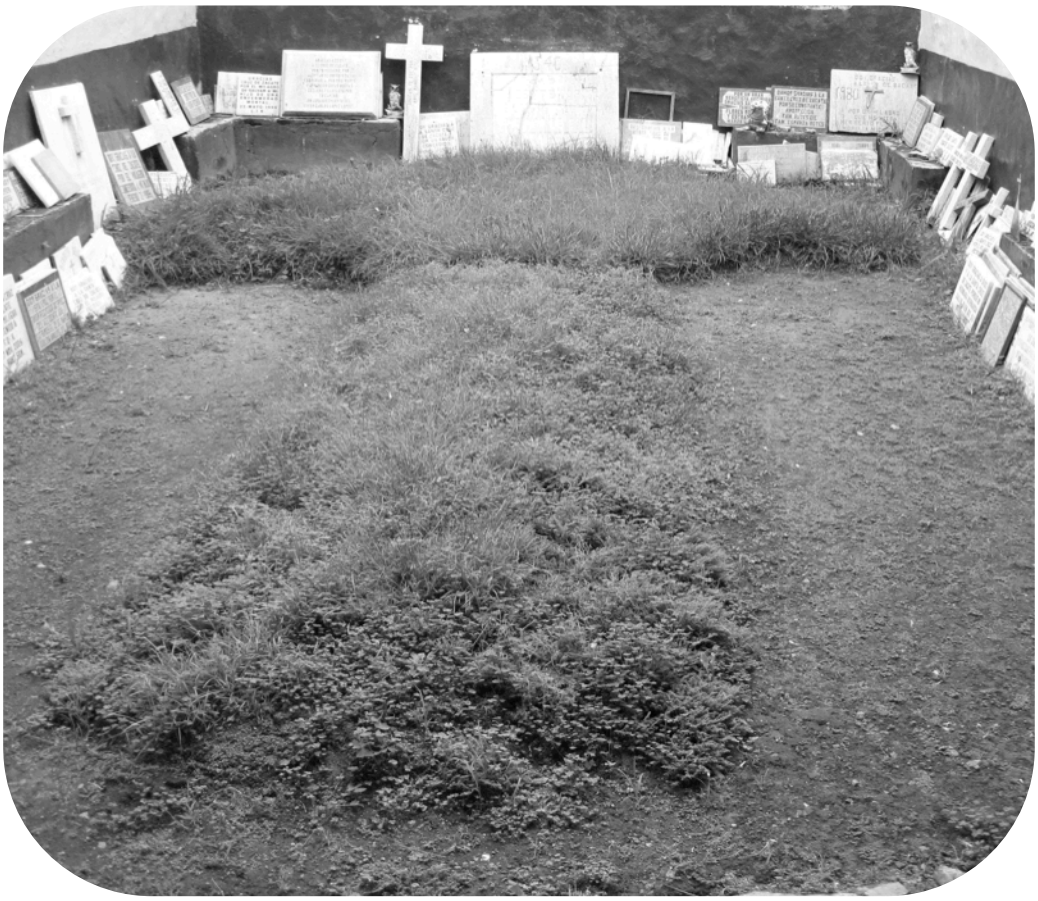

Figure 2: La Cruz de Zacate, Present Day[165]

But such enthusiasm was tempered by persistent "idolatry" and "superstition." The combination of easy contact with serrano groups and scant clerical personnel allowed religious heterodoxy to thrive. Mission fugitives in the sierra were frequently blamed for corrupting their lowlands neighbors, as we have seen. By the eighteenth century priests were no longer complaining of idolatry, but heterodoxy nonetheless remained a problem in the diocese's far reaches.[166] In 1707, members of Jala's Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception sought license to carry their brotherhood's image around the diocese to gather donations for their hospital. The Guadalajara See acceded, but insisted the petitioners prohibit the practice of *huenchihuas*. This

[165] Photographed by the author in August 2009.
[166] As late-colonial clerics complained, "there was much superstition but little idolatry in Indian religious practice"; Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 48.

particular custom centered on the sacrament of marriage, and essentially involved calling upon the Virgin Mary to stand in as godmother. According to ecclesiastical authorities, the practice invited abuse. The priest could easily interrogate earthly godparents in order to find out whether the bride and groom were too closely related, but the Virgin was typically silent on the matter.[167] Similar complaints continued well into the next century, which indicates that these prohibitions were largely ineffective. A Santa María del Oro priest reported in 1814 that, while idolatry and even superstition had disappeared from his parish, "ridiculous" religious practices still flourished.[168] Indeed, the tension between orthodoxy and heterodoxy continued well after secularization in the mid eighteenth century.

When secular priests began assuming benefices in the lowlands beginning around 1750, they at first maintained the religious status quo.[169] Many came from families scattered among the urban and mining hubs and were familiar with the area and its idiosyncrasies. The López Portillo family, for instance, seems to have supplied clergymen to the Real de Chimaltitlán since at least 1691 with the "mining presbyter" Br. Andrés López Portillo. His descendant Nicolás López Portillo, the "cura en encomienda, vicario, y juez eclesiástico del Real de Chimaltitlán y los adjuntos de dicho Aguacatlán y Xala," was involved in a land dispute with the town of San Luis in 1745. Moreover, in 1799, Jala priest Antonio Patrón Maldonado reported on potential seminary students from parishes such as Yxcuintla and Sentispac to be destined for *ministro* (priest's assistant) positions elsewhere. Patrón also explained natives of Tepic and Compostela prefered to stay near their hometowns, but as all of those positions were filled, they typically take

[167] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 3, 15 January 1707.
[168] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1814, 28 February 1814. For other examples, see chapter 3.
[169] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 61, 72, 142, 145.

positions nearby and travel home on the holidays.[170] And for their part, Franciscans never truly left the area. The friars minor only achieved their broadest geographical expansion in 1767 when they took charge of the missions the Jesuits had abandoned, such as the seven Cora missions of the Sierra del Nayarit.[171] And although much is made of the jurisdictional battles between the secular Diocese of Guadalajara and the Franciscan Province of Santiago de Xalisco, duties and relations on the ground seem to have blended easily.[172] Jala was regularly visited by a secular priest at least by 1745, and yet a Franciscan friar was still doling out the Eucharist from the convent in that *cabecera* (head town) in 1751.[173] Friars of different orders would continue to minister to lowlands populations through the first half of the nineteenth century, working in concert with parish priests.[174]

The principal reason for the continuing jurisdictional overlap between the regular and secular clergy was the chronic shortage of ecclesiastical personnel in the region. That shortage led to the unique religious situation along the Nayarit frontier. Even under the constant threat of religious heterodoxy, ecclesiastical personnel made steep concessions regarding control over Church property. In a rare moment of candor, Bishop Antonio Alcalde spoke of compromise in a 1788 report to the intendant of New Galicia, discussed at the beginning of this chapter.[175] First, Alcalde pointed out the difficulty of staffing remote areas of the Guadalajara diocese, given the

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[170] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1659–1799.
[171] De Jesús, *Los franciscanos en México*, 91.
[172] De la Torre summarizes these battles in *Vicarios en entredicho*, 14–16.
[173] See AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, Exp. 17, 26 July 1746; and Ibid., Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1659–1799, 2 Dec. 1751.
[174] See chapters 2 and 3.
[175] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, 23 June 1788.

paltry recompense of fatigue, broken health, and an impoverished retirement.[176] Moreover, with no royal aid and scant obventions, his diocese's principal forms of financial support were confraternities, or lay brotherhoods that held land and livestock in common to pay for religious functions. As Alcalde explained, the masses and sacrifices such brotherhoods funded "form the largest, and most prolific, part of the parochial emoluments" in his diocese.[177] The bishop's words must be examined in a critical light, as he was here justifying the reasons confraternity property should not be included in a royal cadastral survey. Nonetheless, his claims are in accord with other evidence around this period. In the 1830s, the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament was the only source of Church income in the parish of Jalisco.[178]

Although brotherhoods were largely informal—i.e., without official Church sanction—and not under tight control of the clergy, such organizations kept the Church alive. This was especially true along Nayarit's frontier. Regular and secular clergy alike formed these brotherhoods throughout the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[179] Keeping the Church alive, however, required taking the bad with the good. As Alcalde continued, the Indians in his diocese were quick to make trouble if a parish priest challenged their *usos y costumbres*, or local form of governance.[180] When a priest attempted to meddle in confraternity affairs, for example, and install a *vecino* (in this instance, non-Indian) mayordomo over the brotherhood in order to

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[176] Ibid., folio 8.
[177] Ibid., folio 6.
[178] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 26, 22 Jan. 1830.
[179] This periodization is in line with that for the rest of Jalisco, where the bulk of confraternities were founded in the first decades of the 1600s; Chance and Taylor, "Cofradías and Cargos," 8.
[180] "Lately, I have had motion in the *pueblos de indios*, due as much to this adhesion to their *usos y costumbres*, principally regarding this sacred and religious Branch, as for other things I have noticed during my tenure"; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, 23 June 1788, folio 8.

prevent Indians' unsanctioned withdrawals from society funds, it caused an uproar.[181] The cofrades soon abandoned their towns and fled to the hills, according to the bishop, and so granting them full control over ostensibly ecclesiastical property was necessary for survival.

Confraternities were originally intended in the Tridentine Church principally as a means to foster lay orthodoxy. Officially, confraternity charters laid out the specific number of annual masses the brotherhood would pay for, along with any church construction and repair. They also granted license to the mayordomo to collect tithes on specified days. Finally, they delegated to these organizations the responsibility to care for their brothers in times of sickness or death. Pooled funds would cover any funeral costs for the deceased, such as the associated rites, masses, and burial.[182] Unlike their urban counterparts, which frequently invested their combined income in financial instruments such as mortgages and loans, rural confraternities invested in land, livestock, and seed.[183]

But in the rural outposts of New Galicia, confraternities were virtual "montes de piedad." They acted both as buttresses supporting the faith of those who only occasionally saw a priest, as well

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[181] In the early to mid colonial period, mayordomos were selected from among town leaders, variously labeled *gobernadores*, *cabecillas*, *principales*, or *caciques*. For Tepic, see López González, *Las cofradías en Nayarit*, 15; For Jalisco, see AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 21, 15 April 1626; For Jala, see AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 3, 15 January 1707.

[182] The seventeenth-century charter for the Indian pueblo of Tlajomulco, south of Guadalajara, can be found in AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Xalisco, caja 1, exp. 28, November 17, 1672. Nancy Farriss finds Yucatán confraternities acted principally as mutual-aid societies, with funds going toward tax assistance and financial aid for the disabled, widowed, and indigent, in *Maya Society*, 266.

[183] William Taylor finds a similar distinction throughout Jalisco, in *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 304.

as community funds available in times of need.[184] In cash-strapped central Nayarit, clerics often donated a small sum to help found the brotherhood. When Bishop Juan Ruiz Colmenero established a confraternity in the short-lived serrano pueblo of San Francisco de Atenco in 1649, for example, he donated 12 cows, a bull, six mares, and an ass, all for the purpose of breeding and thus multiplying the brotherhood's holdings.[185] Beyond religious functions, frontier confraternity holdings also served as village charity pools, doling out relief during epidemics, famine, and other times of need. A grateful Gabriel López donated two *caballerías* (roughly 210 acres) in 1688, for instance, to the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Acuitapilco, as the brotherhood had previously given him corn, cattle, and 80 pesos.[186] Many confraternities funded local hospitals.[187] Moreover, membership was flexible. When a confraternity administrator was found to have spent more than the brotherhood took in, a priest would typically force him to pay off the debt over time, or cofrades could pool their funds to help the administrator. But along the frontier, many confraternities did not have an official list of members. Nor would such a list be comprehensive if it existed. When the mayordomo of a Jala brotherhood ran up a debt in 1803, for instance, a diocesan inspector suggested the parish priest

[184] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, 23 June 1788, folio 6. Christopher Black situates confraternities within Catholic reform movements of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in "Confraternities and the Parish," 1–26.
[185] Delarrosa, "Entrada del obispo," 82.
[186] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 34, vol. 136, exp. 15.
[187] The confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was attached to a hospital in Cacaluta, near Jala, in 1600; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 2, 1600. Jalisco, Santa María del Oro, Ahuacatlán, and Jomulco also had confraternities attached to their hospitals; see, respectively, Ibid., Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 23, 14 Nov. 1799; Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 24, 18 Feb. 1802; and AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 16, 31 Oct. 1806.

simply seek payment from "all the Indians of the pueblo" rather than attempt to verify the confraternity's official members.[188]

In sum, much like civil officials, ecclesiastical authorities compromised with frontereños in order to encourage them to remain within the colonial order. Importantly, however, frontereño negotiation with civil officials frequently resulted in violence: an assassination here, arson there. Perhaps this was due to proximity. Civil officials were largely invisible along the frontier, only occasionally appearing in response to crisis. Clergy maintained a regular, periodic presence, appearing at least weekly in cabeceras within their jurisdiction. Or perhaps the different negotiation styles had more to do with the sort of exchange involved: whereas civil officials demanded fighters and offered only autonomy, the clergy demanded payment for services rendered, and offered livestock and the land on which to pasture it. Whatever the case, by the end of the colonial period a strong relationship had grown between priests and parishioners along the frontier, a spiritual economy not easily dismantled.[189]

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[188] Ibid., exp. 18, 24 July 1804. Matthew O'Hara finds a similar situation in San Bartolomé Naucalpan, just outside Mexico City, in 1773. An archdiocesan legal advisor advised the archbishop that "[a]lmost all such Indian sodalities … were informal, humble institutions that grew up organically within native communities. They usually began when one Indian donated a piece of land to be rented out and used to support a patron saint's yearly festival, or when a handful of town members solicited alms to support the saint's feast day. In any case, what may have started out as personal devotions, and continued to be managed by an individual or small group, quickly became associated with the entire community, and 'all of the Indians of the town or neighborhood where the [saint's] image is located are considered member [*sic*] of the brotherhood…'"; *A Flock Divided*, 161–162.

[189] Nancy Farriss highlights the power of this relationship in her study of the clergy in the Bourbon period: "[a]ccording to an anonymous Mexican broadsheet, the most effective method of quelling any riot was to station a 'friar with a Holy Crucifix in the nearest plaza', an opinion undoubtedly based on the experience of various tumults during the seventeenth century in which regulars, exhorting the masses to disperse 'for the sake of their souls and loyalty to the king', were successful in calming them after soldiers had failed"; *Crown and Clergy*, 4.

Conclusion

In northwestern New Galicia, the first three hundred years after 1524 saw massive demographic, political, and religious change as new colonial authorities attempted to maintain a fixed labor supply, regulate a dispersed population, and subsume all under the unifying ideology of the Catholic Church. At first, this was attempted by military might. Then, a series of nearly crippling disasters such as the Mixtón and Chichimeca wars demonstrated that such a policy was unsustainable, and coercion gave way to compromise. Frontier towns became the linchpin of security and revenue extraction, and earned a privileged status. Frontereños maintained these civil privileges, such as exemption from tribute and local political control, at an arrow's tip. Assassination, arson, and occasional uprisings convinced authorities the system was still necessary. Priests and parishioners, meanwhile, maintained relations more peaceably. Occasional flight was sufficiently effective to persuade clergy to cede control over Church property, which became *de facto* community property, for use in everything from saint's day festivities to famine relief.

Yet in the late eighteenth century, a cash-strapped Spanish crown revoked this compromise between soldados fronterizos and colonial authorities. As the ascendant Bourbon monarchy drained money into European wars and lost territory to its rivals, it demanded further revenue from its American colonies and more reliable self-defense. At first, viceregal authorities looked to confraternity holdings for income, enacting a series of decrees to either free up land for public use and sale or tax the sodalities. Nayarit brotherhoods' disorganization and informal status were suddenly a liability, and frontier priests attempted to retake control and streamline confraternity

management. In addition, civil authorities began to centralize colonial government by enlarging the regular army at the expense of the irregular, unreliable soldados fronterizos. By the late 1700s, the privileged communities of the Nayarit frontier were reduced to tributary pueblos de indios.

Civil authorities' attacks on confraternities continued after independence, and the clergy consequently continued its own campaign to strengthen Church finances. Liberal Jalisco legislators sought to undermine corporate privilege and immediately took on the issue of Church property. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, intermittent agrarian reform aimed at divesting confraternity land and redistributing it to individual beneficiaries: those who were "once called Indians." Meanwhile, the lower clergy gradually took over confraternity management and either rented or sold off the land in order to invest the money in more secure financial instruments, such as loans and mortgages.

In the chapters to follow, I will discuss these gradual changes to the Nayarit way of life, as frontereños transformed from valued allies to the target of Liberal reform. Chapter 2 covers state-level assaults on Church property from the 1750s to the Reform era, discussing Bourbon reforms and postcolonial disamortization decrees. Chapter 3 examines the changes these reforms brought about at the parish level, detailing conflict and cooperation between town officials and citizens, and priests and parishioners.

CHAPTER 2

Church-State Compromise and Conflict, 1750–1850

> "The religious experience of a given moment reflects not only the tensions of an intimate understanding of religion and its exigencies by a community of believers, but also the tensions inherent in the worldly problems of societies and States."[1]

Introduction

Following centuries of cooperation between civil and ecclesiastical authorities in New Spain, regime change, wars, and the need for revenue drove first the colonial state, then postcolonial governments, to subordinate the Mexican Church and tap into its coffers. This chapter details this century-long process from 1750 to 1850. Although it touches on a variety of economic measures that civil authorities implemented to effect this change, this chapter focuses primarily on land reform. For its part, the Church was the largest landowner in the colony. And while land was not the primary economic engine of either the colony or the postcolonial state—silver held that position—land nonetheless held unique significance. Beyond serving as the foundation of Mexican agriculture and husbandry, land was integral to religious practice when its fruits went to support the local cult. That Church land reform and redistribution occupied the minds of both colonial and republican authorities for more than a century attests to its importance.

[1] Connaughton, "Transiciones el la cultura política/religiosa mexicana," 447–448.

This chapter has three aims. First, it details the various ways civil authorities attempted to take control of ecclesiastical real estate. This macro-level examination considers both viceregal and Jaliscan state legislation. For their part, viceregal authorities sought to exploit the confusion between land officially owned by the Church, and public land that was simply dedicated to religious purposes, in an effort to free up land for subsequent sale. The postcolonial state was not interested in selling real estate, but rather in collecting property-tax revenue. In general, nineteenth-century measures sought to redistribute communal land among private individuals in order to generate tax income and kick-start a real estate market.

Second, this chapter describes how the ecclesiastical hierarchy—primarily that of the Guadalajara See—responded to that legislation. The colonial Church was able to successfully evade land reform in the colonial period by pitting various civil authorities against each other or by simply stalling. But in the republican period, anticlerical measures led the clergy to take the offensive. By the mid-1800s, some members of the clergy were excommunicating radical Liberals and directly funding insurrection in an attempt to shield the Church from hostile regimes.

Third, I offer a number of examples that demonstrate the impact these measures had on priests at the parish level. While most land-reform measures in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had only marginal success alienating land from the Church, it would be inaccurate to say these decrees had no effect. Beginning after independence, municipal officials and Indian groups would utilize land decrees to take control of disputed territory, and priests inevitably were either enlisted or undermined in these coups. Meanwhile, the Guadalajara See engaged in land

reforms of its own, appropriating confraternity territory and either renting it or selling it off in an attempt to protect Church wealth from alienation. These maneuvers, in turn, had a dramatic impact on priest-parishioner relations, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

This work contributes to a fast-growing scholarship on the evolution of land tenure at the local level. Scholars such as Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, Emilio Kourí, Edgar Mendoza, Benjamin Smith, and Matthew Butler have found postcolonial Mexican agrarian reform was a "long, arduous dialectic of accommodation and resistance" rather than a series of watershed moments on a timeline stretching from the Reform to the Revolution.[2] In this view, legislation such as the 1856 Lerdo Law both loses significance and gains new meaning. It loses significance in the sense that the decree proved ineffective at converting communal landholders into individual property owners. As Smith finds in the Mixteca Baja, many landholders were able to reconstitute corporate ownership in the years after the Reform through companies such as *sociedades agrícolas*.[3] But on the other hand, the Lerdo Law was the successful culmination of a half-century of attempts to "rationalize the countryside," as Escobar and Butler put it.[4] More importantly than land redistribution, early agrarian reform in Mexico forced property holders to formalize their ownership. Land that had long been merely dedicated to a saint could now be defined as either municipal or ecclesiastical property, and interested parties wrestled over that distinction for half a century.

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[2] Ohmstede and Butler, "Introduction," 41; Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*; Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided*; and Mendoza, *Municipios, cofradías, y tierras comunales*.
[3] Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, 67, 174.
[4] Ohmstede and Butler, "Introduction," 36.

Following this revisionism, my investigation shows that the Lerdo Law on its own did not incite insurrection along the Nayarit frontier. Instead, it merely impelled the Church to continue to divest itself of real estate, which alienated cofrades who relied on that land for ritual. Unlike Mario Aldana Rendón, who points to the Lerdo Law as the prime catalyst for Lozada's rebellion, I have found that the 1856 decree had a negligible effect on frontier landholding.[5] While the decree swept up land valued at around 100,000 pesos in the canton of Tepic, much of it was civil property in urban areas, and nearly all ecclesiastical properties were owned by elite confraternities in the city of Tepic. Rebels along the frontier instead rose up against local sales of confraternity territory in the late 1840s and early 1850s, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Struggle Over Confraternities During the Colonial Period

Compromise marked the relationship between clergy and the Crown in the empire's remote regions for much of the colonial period. A relative dearth of royal personnel set friars and priests to assume control over non-spiritual affairs in addition to their ministry. Moreover, the Crown extended judicial and economic privileges that enabled the Church to become the most influential political force in the rural countryside. Although local authority was always contested, a clerical regime had developed along the Nayarit frontier by the end of the eighteenth century. Clerics were town leaders. Pueblo residents were parishioners and cofrades. And most importantly, communal land and its fruits belonged to the confraternity.

[5] Aldana, *La rebelión agraria de Manuel Lozada*.

This de facto clerical rule at first owed much to the blurred jurisdictional boundaries between religious and secular authority. Friars served as a vanguard unit, expanding the empire's boundaries through evangelization and mission outposts. Moreover, through "their literacy, their city connections, and their standing as public men who in principle stood apart from partisanship," priests often served as village advocates.[6] They would petition the Crown for pueblo land grants, sell grain at cost during famines, and lend money for legal disputes with nearby haciendas. In a 1758 land dispute between the mission of Atonalisco and Tepic confraternities, Atonalisco's Franciscan missionary served as village representative in the early days of the case.[7] In another example, the cleric of Huaristemba attempted to suppress vecino greed in this Indian town in the mid seventeenth century. The mayordomo of Huaristemba's confraternity had been cheated out of four mules in a poor trade for a "useless" donkey, and the clergyman suggested the Guadalajara See intervene to undo the exchange in order to make an example for the other vecinos of the town.[8] Although local landowners and priests frequently debated the nature of clerical influence over town or mission residents—specifically, whether it was good or bad, beneficial or detrimental to the local economy—the fact that clergy had such influence was never in doubt.

And with this greater influence and responsibility came greater privilege. The clergy enjoyed immunity from civil prosecution and church goods were exempt from the *alcabala*, or sales tax. But the Church's control over the agrarian domain was by far its most significant privilege. First, ecclesiastical mortmain enabled the Church to function as a boundless warehouse, collecting

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[6] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 163.
[7] AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 22, folio 112. See chapter 1 for a broader discussion of this case.
[8] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 31, 26 March 1661.

property via bequests and purchases thus made inalienable by the Church's nature as a corporation. By this method it amassed vast swathes of territory, making it the largest landowner in New Spain.[9] Furthermore, the Church had a stake in much of the rest of colonial territory through mortgages and liens on private property.[10] "Virtually every hacienda," according to Costeloe, "…was responsible for a lien and was paying part of its profits to a priest or an ecclesiastical corporation."[11]

Second and most importantly, neither the clergy nor frontier parishioners distinguished between secular and religious property for most of the colonial period. Public need trumped such a dualistic view of communal goods. On one hand, confraternity livestock were sold or butchered as much for famine relief, as for the feast day of the village's patron saint. In Ixtlán, for instance, a friar recommended maintaining sodality cattle if only to provide the town with food. The Spanish mayordomo there applied for license in 1699 to sell off all confraternity cattle due to the herd's constant attrition from predators and nearby sugarcane field workers. But such a move would only cause further problems, counseled the friar: it was important to provide something for the pueblo to eat, and prevent them from stealing.[12] On the other hand, confraternity cattle grazed on public land. With few exceptions, frontier confraternities did not officially own land for most of the colonial period, or at least did not own sufficient grazing land to pasture their

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[9] Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Colonial Rule*, 126. The ecclesiastical corporation would retain this status into the early nineteenth century; Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico*, 21.
[10] These mortgages helped stabilize agriculture in New Spain. As Eric Van Young explains, "[a] vital function of Church investment-banking was to redistribute capital generated in more highly productive but risky economic sectors, primarily mining and commerce, by channeling it into large-scale agriculture. Through this redistributive function, the Church may be said to have aided significantly in the process whereby the commercial and mining sectors of the economy subsidized an agriculture of relatively low productivity"; *Hacienda and Market*, 183.
[11] Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico*, 27.
[12] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 26 August 1699.

stock. The Ixtlán cattle mentioned above, for example, grazed on ejidal land.[13] Numerous royal edicts throughout the colonial period revealed the extent of this jurisdictional overlap, as well as the Crown's tacit approval of this situation. Whether to standardize land measurement or raise funds for a royal armada, different monarchs throughout the colonial period ordered that all land occupied without legitimate title be re-measured and sold.[14] Such land was denoted *tierra realenga*, or royal land, and technically pertained to the Crown. It could then be distributed through a *merced*, in which an individual or corporation applied to purchase a usufruct title for the land, at a small fee. Tequepespan and Jala asked the royal commissioner to re-measure land used by their confraternities before they applied for a *merced* to buy it back in the late 1680s.[15] The Jomulco confraternity did the same in the mid 1700s.[16] San Luis and Pochotitlán also confirmed their land titles at this time. Although town leaders there did not explicitly mention that the land was used as confraternity pastureland, it was indeed grazing ground for community livestock.[17]

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, this compromise between Crown and Church came to an end. Royal and viceregal officials demanded the clergy step back from administrative duties and restrict themselves to their ministry. For priests along the Nayarit frontier, however, "ministry" encompassed much more than simply celebrating weekly mass. Over the course of the

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[13] As distinguished from the ejidos of post-revolutionary Mexico, that bureaucratic institution designed to distribute communal land for individual usufruct. During the colonial period, the term *ejido* denoted remote public land of poor quality. It was also referred to as the *monte*.
[14] See for example Felipe IV's mid-eighteenth-century request in AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 1, exp. 4, folio 186.
[15] AIPEJ, Libros de Gobierno, libro 10, folios 96–98; and ibid., Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 2, exp. 12, folio 67.
[16] AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 22, exp. 4, folios 29–37; and ibid., libro 28, exp. 31, folios 62–64.
[17] AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 25–2, exp. 3, s/f.

final decades of the colonial period, the clergy sought to shore up their threatened position and define long-vague ecclesiastical boundaries. This inevitably came at the expense of frontier cofrades, who had been accustomed to defining their own membership in their sodalities, and direct access to sodality property. Now, however, what before had occupied the slippery category of communal land was now officially confraternity territory. And the priest was the sodality's principal member, and the guardian of its financial reserves.

Following a series of losses and stalemates in European wars, Spain's new rulers turned to its American colonies for revival beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century. As part of this process, Bourbon reformers reoriented the imperial government around an expanding secular bureaucracy, wresting power and wealth from the Church. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Bourbon dynasty was born into financial straits and bloodshed, with a bankrupt treasury and the subsequent War of the Spanish Succession, which raged until 1713 and ended with further Spanish concessions to its European neighbors. Following decades of largely ineffectual reforms at home in the metropole and another military setback, in the Seven Years' War from 1756–1763, the Bourbon regime looked instead to streamline colonial revenue. Early on in this process, Spain's ministers aimed at the Catholic clergy's longstanding privileges as obstacles to greater profit and began a decades-long process to remove the Church from matters now perceived to be within the state's domain. As Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, the fiscal of the Council of Castile, explained in his 1769 *Juicio imparcial*, "the Church exists within the State."[18]

[18] Brading, *Church and State*, 10–11.

Some of the Crown's early attempts to suppress Church power targeted confraternities and asserted long-ignored royal regulations. At issue was the confusion between secular community funds and religious property, veiled behind concern over such brotherhoods' supposed decadence. Although ineffective, these decrees began the long process to divide clerical from secular property. In a February 1758 decree, for example, Fernando VI attempted to liberate *cajas de comunidad* (community chests) from illegal withdrawals for religious purposes and disbanded all confraternities founded without royal license. Although royal law required such license, cofrades rarely sought it. The overwhelming majority of religious brotherhoods in New Spain fell under this decree.[19] Nevertheless, without enforcement the law had little effect. Two years later, Carlos III demanded prelates retake control over the confraternities in their dioceses and prohibit "provocative and dishonorable dances likely to cause spiritual ruin," but this measure, too, fell on deaf ears.[20] Then, in a series of decrees and rescripts restarting after the Jesuit expulsion, royal and colonial administrators renewed the campaign against confraternities begun a decade before. In early 1769, the fiscal Campomanes wrote a ruling regarding confraternities in Spain, denouncing their excesses and calling for an accounting of their celebrations.[21] This judgment was extended to New Spain in the next decade. In 1772, Viceroy Bucareli ordered an account of all *bienes de comunidad* in Indian pueblos, which was expanded to include confraternities in 1775. The inspector found that, while few communities possessed secular bienes *per se*, nearly all maintained confraternities. Furthermore, in his estimation the confraternities had flourished at the expense of public property. Once a town decided to host a

[19] Brooks, "Parish and Cofradía," 137, 143–144. As Brooks illustrates, of 951 confraternities in the Archdiocese of Mexico in the 1780s, "only about one fifth had received any sort of permission, and that usually only some sort of *ex post facto* endorsement from the Bishop"; Ibid., 68.
[20] Ibid., 137.
[21] Ibid., 125.

feast day, for instance, the elders would partition sufficient secular land to fund the festivities. Within a generation the original purpose of the land was forgotten, becoming instead "a sacred world which can only be used for the cult of the *santo*."[22] The next year in 1776, the Crown issued a rescript mandating all brotherhoods obtain royal license, and could not convene without a royal official present, placing their property under royal jurisdiction.[23] This was followed up in 1777 with a viceregal inquiry into rural confraternities.[24]

The ecclesiastical hierarchy responded to these persistent and increasing attacks in two ways. First, Mexican prelates conducted internal reforms, and some dissolved scores of lay brotherhoods in the late eighteenth century. In 1794 the archbishop of Mexico ordered more than 450 of his diocese's 991 confraternities be dissolved.[25] The bishop of Oaxaca had done much the same in 1778.[26] These sodality reforms had enormous repercussions at the parish level, which will be discussed in chapter 3. And second, even as the clergy were consolidating confraternities of their own accord, they stonewalled state reformers. After all, the prelates understood these brotherhoods provided the bulk of parish revenue in remote areas. To dissolve them on the scale sought by the Crown risked the abandonment of entire parishes as priests would desert their posts for lack of sustenance, as well as riots by angry parishioners.[27] When pressed to survey or reform the confraternities in accord with civil regulation, bishops frequently expressed helplessness. Following the viceregal order for a confraternity census, the bishop of Guadalajara

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[22] Ibid., 143–145.
[23] Brading, *Church and State*, 131.
[24] Larkin, *The Very Nature of God*, 149.
[25] Ibid., 151.
[26] Brooks, "Parish and Cofradía," 149.
[27] Guadalajara bishop Antonio Alcalde spoke of both "motion in the pueblos de indios" in his 1788 letter, and priests' desertion; see chapter 1.

responded in 1779 with a request for yet another order—this time with sharper teeth, "in virtue of which he could command his priests to comply in the matter," as they had thus far ignored his entreaties.[28] This was likely disingenuous, as elsewhere prelates and parish priests together resisted royal authorities' intrusion at the parish level. A subdelegate in the Intendancy of Guanajuato complained the bishop's provisor issued an order prohibiting him from inspecting or administering confraternities. At other times, priests acted of their own accord. In Tochimilco, within the Puebla intendancy, a subdelegate attempted to halt one confraternity meeting that did not have a quorum. When he protested, the priest pounded the table "and said that he alone had power to determine the whole matter." Intendants from Toluca, San Luís Potosí, and Valladolid presented similar reports.[29]

Even if the Bourbon confraternity reforms brought in little surplus revenue for the Crown, they had far-reaching effects at the parish level. Priests attempted to formalize sodality holdings and forestall state expropriation, and sparked numerous land disputes. The legal cases surrounding Xalisco's consolidated confraternities—one vecino, one Indian—at the turn of the nineteenth century demonstrate well the complex nature of land tenure, as well as the difficulty in formalizing usufruct that had long been informal. I will examine this case in three stages. In the first stage, the Jalisco parish priest attempted to purchase rights to pastureland in order to secure its usufruct for years to come, but a slow-moving bureaucracy and uncertain land ownership halted the case. Second, a local hacendado sought to exploit the confraternities' lack of formal usufruct while the priest's case floundered in court, and began demanding rent for pasturing on his land. Third, facing growing court costs on one hand and an unprecedented demand for rent on

[28] Brooks, "Parish and Cofradía," 155.
[29] Ibid., 196–197.

the other, cofrades resisted both innovations. They attempted a defense of traditional pasturage even as their traditional allies—here, the priest and the hacendado—sought new arrangements.

Citing a growing need to protect confraternity livestock, Jalisco parish priest José Ignacio de los Rios sought license from the Guadalajara See to buy up royal land usufruct for the confraternities in mid November 1799.[30] Despite herds of nearly 1,400 head of cattle, the sodality had never held land of its own. Instead, the livestock grazed on royal land sandwiched between multiple haciendas, and de los Rios feared the hacendados would snatch up the territory if the confraternity did not act quickly.[31] The See agreed, and de los Rios quickly submitted a petition to the government the next month. But it was only after numerous delays—including an Indian rebellion, in which a Jalisco alcalde was forced into exile—that bureaucrats finally began to measure the territory two years later in 1802. Other problems then arose due to undefined land boundaries. A different mayordomo governed the sodality in 1802 than the one who made the original petition in 1799, and their differing accounts of the land's extension aroused suspicion in government officials. After some initial measurements, the surveyor found no royal property in the vicinity. The unsettled case quickly became a serious financial liability for the confraternity as the government body pressed for payment for both the measurement and the court costs, and the priest attempted to withdraw the petition, but to no avail.

As the cleric's case floundered in the courts, one local hacendado attempted to take advantage of the confusion and force the confraternities to pay rent for grazing its cattle on his land.

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[30] Technically, the land was to be held by the primarily vecino Confraternity of the Most Holy Lord of the Sacrament, but in this case the sodalities acted as one corporation, under one mayordomo.
[31] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 23, 14 Nov. 1799.

Beginning in mid 1805, the owner of the Hacienda de Costilla, Rafael Maldonado, began assembling proof that the sodalities pastured their livestock on his land, and that they had no land of their own. Numerous witnesses verified this situation and in 1806 Maldonado had his land measured by a Tepic official who found no available land between his hacienda and the Indians' communal *merced*.[32] Maldonado then attempted to sidestep Fr. de los Rios and the cofrades by directly petitioning the Guadalajara See. He explained that he had never fenced in his property as the brotherhoods would then have lost their cattle. But given the rising demands of feeding his family, Maldonado now needed either to receive payment for the privilege, or else fence his land and devote it to cultivation. Diocesan authorities demanded he seek cofrade input on any rental arrangement, and Maldonado reluctantly forwarded his petition in June 1806.

The cofrades, for their part, pushed back against both innovations. When the Real Audiencia— the governing body responsible for measuring the royal land in 1802— circumvented Fr. de los Rios and appealed directly to them for remuneration, cofrades insisted their priest, and not the sodality, had instigated the legal process to purchase the usufruct to their pastureland. In the end, de los Rios agreed to pay any pending legal and surveying costs. He still owed more than 300 pesos when the last document in the case was filed in 1807.[33] Meanwhile, the cofrades' response to Maldonado was unsurprisingly hostile, and highlighted a longstanding tradition of fluid land usage and consequent frustration with the hacendado's attempted money grab. Sodality members uniformly attested to what was hitherto a peaceful coexistence between the confraternity and the

[32] Ibid. It is suggestive that the subdelegado of Tepic, who measured Maldonado's land in 1806, and the later owner of the Hacienda de Costilla in 1831 shared the same last name, Aranton; ibid., exp. 24. Perhaps the Maldonado and Aranton families were linked somehow, or worked in collusion against the Jalisco confraternity.
[33] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, segunda colección, leg. 23, vol. 73, exp. 23, folios 21–69.

hacienda. Not only did the hacienda permit brotherhood cattle to graze on its lands, the brotherhood permitted the more numerous, and therefore more voracious, hacienda cattle to graze on its lands. More broadly, the lines between hacienda and confraternity had never been well defined. Both hacienda and sodality workers performed the annual cattle branding together. For that matter, cofrades and mayordomos alike had worked for the hacienda. Maldonado's petition, in the cofrades' estimation, had been the "only one in more than 100 years since our foundation to attempt to injure this brotherhood."

For cofrades who had long thrived in a spiritual economy built on compromise and informality, there was no effective difference between the religious and the secular. Like their predecessors elsewhere along the Nayarit frontier, the witnesses in turn-of-the-century Xalisco did not distinguish public from ecclesiastical property. In their testimony they variously referred to their pasturelands as royal land, municipal land, confraternity land, or simply "our lands." Furthermore, unaffiliated town members were just as invested in the brotherhood as official cofrades. The last note in the expediente came from the secular officeholders of alcalde and regidor, the confraternity mayordomo, and "some from the masses." All present together in the town hall, they defended the "conservation of the divine cult" and the "growth of this, our confraternity."

Beneath this struggle over jurisdiction and community wealth was a struggle for survival. From the moment they ascended the throne, the Bourbon kings faced potent threats from European rivals and no way to fund defense should the need arise. When reforms in the metropole failed to produce necessary revenue, Spanish monarchs and ministers turned to the American colonies for

aid. There they met an entrenched and entitled clergy, long accustomed to relative autonomy and the beneficiaries of centuries of sound financial investment and expansion. In order to tap into this wealth, the Crown and viceregal authorities instituted a series of changes from the 1760s to 1804, all designed to remove the clergy from the administrative realm. Intendants were entrusted with the administration of the tithe in 1786. A decade later, the Crown rescinded the ecclesiastical *fuero*, exposing the clergy to civil jurisdiction in cases of grave crimes.[34] A series of small taxes sapped the Church through the 1790s.[35] *Sínodos*, or royal stipends for the clergy, were cut off in the late colonial period.[36] Then, in 1804, all Church capital (excepting that of Indian confraternities) was to be deposited in the royal treasury under the consolidation decree.[37] For all of this latter decree's notoriety—of the Bourbon reforms targeting the Church, Brading labeled the consolidation decree the "most far-reaching in its effects"—it was the series of attempts to circumscribe the confraternity's ambit that proved to have the greatest impact at the parish level.[38] Over the course of three decades beginning in the late 1750s, Bourbon reformers both in the metropole and Mexico City sought to separate what had long been conjoined: secular and ecclesiastical property. While these measures were largely unsuccessful, the clergy engaged in reforms of their own. Feeling the pressure to formalize property holdings, the Church acted swiftly to establish full control over territory that before only had a whiff of legality. In some

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[34] As Brading points out, "in any event, only fifteen cases were heard by the court, and several of these were strongly contested"; *Church and State*, 127.
[35] Brading, *Church and State*, 8.
[36] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 127–129.
[37] Lic. Jose Cassillas, governor of the Guadalajara diocese, mentions the exception for confraternities composed entirely of Indians in an 1806 case; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 16, carpeta 31 Oct. 1806, 4 Jan. 1808. According to article 14 of the consolidation decree's subsequent instruction, "[s]e exceptúan de la regla anterior las cofradías que sean puramente de indios, pues no se han de enajenar sus bienes y propiedades, ni hacer de ellos la menor novedad…"; von Wobeser, *Dominación colonial*, 163, n. 43.
[38] Brading, *Church and State*, 226.

instances—such as that of Xalisco—these maneuvers backfired as parishioners put up a traditional defense against the demands of a changing political environment in the late colonial period. But in the postcolonial Mexican state, tradition was no longer sufficient. Cofrades had to learn how to grapple with the new boundaries erected between the increasingly hostile Church and State.

Anticlerical Reforms and the Church's Response in the Nineteenth Century

The Mexican Church and State in dialectic struggled over power and influence in the economic, social, political, and spiritual spheres during the first half of the nineteenth century. For their part, early postcolonial governments proved unstable. In an attempt to eliminate rivals and find a quick cash flow, these governments issued decrees that mirrored those of their Bourbon predecessors. They subjected the clergy to government oversight and exerted control over Church spending, for example. For its part, the Church suffered a personnel crisis in the aftermath of independence that prevented the institution from presenting a united front against threats to its position. Specifically, Church administration shrank as many members of the lower clergy rebelled against the wealthy ecclesiastical hierarchy, and others simply died off without replacement as the Vatican refused to recognize an independent Mexico. But beginning in the 1840s, a resurgent Church pushed back against anticlericalism by supporting sympathetic governments and rebellions.

The remainder of this chapter and the chapter to follow will discuss Church-State relations in postcolonial Mexico, how that relationship exerted pressure at the parish level, and how

frontereños responded to that pressure and in turn forced change at the diocesan level. First, I will examine Jalisco's anticlerical legislation, specifically regarding the tithe, the patronato, and land tenure, as well as the Guadalajara See's resistance and adaptation to those laws. Second, I will demonstrate the effect this had on religious and secular authorities at the parish level as they interpreted and enacted these decrees. Third, in chapter 3 I will describe how these political maneuvers circumscribed frontereño agency through legal means, and ultimately pushed Nayarit's lower classes into outright rebellion.

In the interregnum during the independence war, the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Guadalajara remained politically active and, when an alternative government favorable to the Church presented itself in 1821, it received the high clergy's support. At first, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were immediately involved in the constitutional politics of the post-coup Spanish state and served as local candidates for the various representative bodies. In April 1809, for example, the Ayuntamiento of Guadalajara selected three citizens to enter a lottery, from which one would be chosen as the city's candidate at the national election. Two of these three were clerics—Bishop Juan Cruz Ruiz de Cabañas and the diocesan governor—and Cabañas was tapped as representative. The next year, the city council selected José Simeón de Uría Vial, a member of the cathedral chapter, as its representative at the Cortes de Cádiz.[39] The lower clergy divided their loyalty in the fall of 1810 with Fr. Hidalgo's uprising in the Bajío, and an estimated 22 priests joined the insurgency in the Guadalajara diocese, 12 in the region that is present-day Jalisco.[40] Nonetheless, most lower clergy remained loyal to the state. Together with the high clergy, they were intimately involved in all subsequent elections under the Cádiz Constitution of

[39] Rodríguez, *'Rey, religión, yndependencia y unión*," 18–19.
[40] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 453–454.

1812, whether conducting censuses to determine the electorate at the parish level or serving as delegates to the numerous bodies in this byzantine electoral system. However, the Church as a corporation did not fare well in the Cádiz courts, despite its significant representation. Spanish Liberals controlled the courts, and broadly maintained the Bourbon agenda. The Cortes abolished the Inquisition, restricted religious orders, and began threatening the ecclesiastical and military fueros in 1820. Significantly for the Church and military, the Crown was sufficiently flexible on similar matters to forestall rebellion; shrewd prelates could always play king and viceroy against each other, for example.[41] But the "headless Spanish state, handed over to liberals, did not steer a clear course."[42] When royalist Gen. Agustín de Iturbide appealed to Bishop Cabañas with a plan to achieve autonomy within the Spanish Empire, while preserving the ecclesiastical fuero and entreating Fernando VII to come to Mexico City to rule over the new state, the Guadalajara cleric supplied 25,000 pesos to the military commander's cause.[43] And when it became clear neither Fernando VII nor any other European prince would come to Mexico to rule, Cabañas presided over Iturbide's coronation.

But Iturbide's empire fell by 1823, and the new Jaliscan state government was especially wary of clerical power during Mexico's first federalist republic. "[A]lways at the vanguard of innovation, initiating and putting in action the most liberal and exaggerated projects," Jaliscan politicians were the first in the nation to directly target Church wealth.[44] On April 3, 1824, radical Liberal governor Prisciliano Sánchez notified the Guadalajara See the state congress was forming a

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[41] The debate over confraternity property between the bishop of Guadalajara, viceroy Revillagigedo, and Carlos IV is instructive; see Brooks, "Parish and Cofradía," 187–193.
[42] Connaughton, *Clerical Ideology*, 79.
[43] Rodríguez O., *'Rey, religión, yndependencia y unión'*, 67.
[44] José María Bocanegra, cited in Connaughton, "Escollos republicanos," 181.

commission to find sources of priestly income other than obventions—payments for services such as burials, marriages, and baptisms. He mentioned the tithe as one possible source—implying that the 20 percent typically allotted to the lower clergy was being misdirected—or "other pious funds pertaining to the State."[45] Although the specific response to this request is not known, the Guadalajara cathedral chapter immediately rejected the commission's output: Art. 7 of the state's 1824 constitution. This aggressive decree combined the pronouncement of a Catholic state with a caveat: that state would assume control over Church funds and fix ecclesiastical expenses. The state congresses of Chihuahua, Mexico, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato would soon follow Jalisco with their own versions of this article.[46] State authorities acted quickly to appropriate Church authority, for example, proportioning 400 pesos each to two ecclesiastics per annum for the pueblos of San Sebastián, Santa Catalina, and San Andrés in the Sierra del Nayarit.[47] According to the Guadalajara cathedral chapter, Art. 7 "reeked of Protestantism," and its members refused to swear obedience.[48] Furthermore, they sought the president's intercession against the state. The nation's first executive acceded, and permitted Church authorities to selectively swear obedience to their state constitution. But the battle was far from over in Jalisco.

In early 1827, the state congress set up a tithe board to gather the diocesan tax in Guadalajara and determine how it would be distributed. This scheme set off a ripple of consequences for the Church. First, it gave impetus to the attempted creation of state-based dioceses, replacing the colonial-era boundaries that cut across post-independence state lines. The state congresses of

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[45] *Colección de los decretos*, 194.
[46] Mora, *Obras sueltas*, 247.
[47] It is not clear whether these ecclesiastics were ever appointed; *Colección de los decretos*, 302.
[48] *Colección de los decretos*, 359; and Vázquez, "Introducción," 20.

Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí, both within the Diocese of Guadalajara, feared the loss of tithe income to Jalisco with the creation of the tithe board, and in 1828 moved to divide the bishopric.[49] As San Luis delegates explained, diocesan authorities tended only to negotiate with civil authorities in the state where the See resided.[50] Second, in addition to partitioning the diocese, the Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí congresses discouraged parishes within their respective state lines from sending the tithe to Jalisco. This, in combination with other factors such as slackening pressure to comply with the tithe, cut the Guadalajara diocese's earnings from that tax from 125,968 pesos in 1828, to 41,885 in 1830.[51]

State authorities also took on the patronato: broad government oversight of Church affairs, such as diocesan boundaries and clerical appointments. In 1821, the interim government between the Cortes de Cádiz and Iturbide's monarchy assumed the royal patronato. In early March the next year, Church authorities convened and declared this patronato null, but permitted the civil government to veto candidates unacceptable "for political reasons."[52] Nevertheless, in their early constitutions, Chihuahua, Durango, Mexico, Veracruz, Yucatán, and Chiapas all reaffirmed this right.[53] Jalisco enacted its own patronato decree in March 1826.[54] In the 1820s, these measures amounted to mere political posturing. Despite vociferous debates—a Yucatán delegate claimed "Mexico had broken the chains that tied it to Spain, but not those that attached it to Rome"—

[49] Connaughton, "Escollos republicanos," 168.
[50] Connaughton, "El ocaso del proyecto de 'nación católica,' " 256.
[51] Olveda, "Jalisco y su primera experiencia federalista," 209. Nationwide, archdiocesan authorities estimated the Mexican Church's tithe income in 1845 was not even a seventh of what it was in 1810; Connaughton, "El ocaso del proyecto de 'nación católica,' " 257.
[52] Vázquez, "Iglesia, ejército, y centralismo," 209.
[53] Vázquez, "Introducción," 20.
[54] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. II, 237–238.

each state effectively predicated its decree on papal cooperation.[55] Pending an accord with the Vatican, civil authorities would not name priests or bishops to assume clerical posts. Indeed, the steady loss of parish personnel demonstrates this refusal. In the diocese of Guadalajara, parish priests administered 119 of 135 parishes; by 1830, this number had dropped to 85.[56]

One important reason for this inaction was financial. The new political apparatus, with periodic elections and a growing bureaucracy, was much more expensive to maintain than the colonial system of governance. Due to a longstanding tithe-distribution regulation, by 1833 some 62 percent of the tithe was going to civil authorities, and none of this went to fill clerical vacancies.[57]

Yet maintaining at least a theoretical hold on the patronato was critically important, due to politicians' fear of renegade clergy and their influence over the rural population. This fear of

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[55] Staples, *La iglesia*, 55. I say "effectively," as Jalisco's Decree 30 does not explicitly state it would await a papal accord; *Colección de los decretos*, vol. II, 237–238. This followed Pres. Guadalupe Victoria's letter 1 January 1826, which "implied an immediate accord between the State and the Church without the intervention of the pope"; Staples, *La iglesia*, 48.

[56] Ibid., 23. Curiously, this drop in parish assignments was accompanied by a *rise* in clerical personnel in this same period, from 553 in 1822 to 618 in 1829, before it dropped to 542 in 1830. Staples explains these figures are misleading. Of the 3,463 total priests counted in 1825, only 1,240 were in active service—"the rest were sick, retired, or served as chaplains; others, like the members of the cathedral chapters, were dedicated to administrative labors or teaching"; Ibid., 24. At least a portion of the clergy were dedicated to a political career. For a poorly paid parish priest or one without a benefice, embarking upon a legislative career would be both a smart financial move and an easy one, as the well-educated, eloquent rural priest was the town's obvious candidate for congressman. While article 23 of the 1824 national constitution prohibited bishops and some members of the cathedral chapters from holding political office, the lower clergy were elected in droves. Priests represented an average of 30 percent of national delegates throughout the 1820s. See Sordo, "Los congresistas eclesiásticos," 561–562, 571.

[57] Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico*, 20. As Chowning explains, the republican state inherited the royal share of the tithe, and this share increased with every vacancy in the cathedral chapter and the bishopric; "The Management of Church Wealth," 471–472.

insurrectionary priests had its origins in the independence war. Fr. Hidalgo's call to arms rapidly massed peasants into an uncontrollable force, and the systematic massacre of dozens of Spaniards and other elites in Guanajuato, Valladolid, and Guadalajara offered horrifying illustrations of mob violence.[58] Other examples during the postcolonial period seemed to reinforce this transformation in the role of the clergy from pacifying influence to hostile insurgent. And government officials—largely comprised of the very group that decried Hidalgo's appeal to the lower classes—reacted with predictable brutality.[59] Mexico City authorities apprehended Fr. Joaquín Arenas in 1827 after he attempted to orchestrate a Spanish takeover of the fledgling Mexican nation, and the national congress hastily responded by issuing an expulsion order encompassing all but a few Spaniards remaining in the country. One third of Spaniards had left by the end of 1828, and the regular clergy lost 17 percent of its personnel.[60] Other ecclesiastics were apprehended and executed in the wake of the conspiracy.[61] Again in 1834, two priests launched the Plan de Ecatzingo, calling for the return of an indigenous monarchy headed by Moctezuma's descendants.[62] Although this particular plan did not represent a credible threat to the government, it nevertheless reinforced the notion that the "Indian" masses and their ministers were linked as insurrectionaries. Even non-intervention could be menacing. Silvia Arrom points out that, during the sack of the Parián in Mexico City in 1828, no priest emerged to quell the rioting hordes, as would almost certainly have happened during the colonial period. Worryingly, this represented not merely the secularization of Mexican government, but likely also local clerics' disgust with the political party presumed to be responsible for the

[58] Hamnett, *Roots of Insurgency*, 134–135.
[59] Hamnett, "Mexico's Royalist Coalition," 55, 86.
[60] Sordo, "El congreso nacional," 95.
[61] Connaughton, "Escollos republicanos," 170.
[62] Vázquez, "Introducción," 32.

mayhem, and their conscious decision to let the crowd run amok.[63] Although many, if not most, parish priests did not exercise such influence, this presumed authority was enough to strike fear in the hearts of their political enemies. The Jaliscan vice-governor implied as much in 1824 following the promulgation of the state constitution with the detested Art. 7, mentioned above. He exlained that the state congress would, of course, change any legislation not in line with any future official accord with the Vatican. He emphasized this, he stated, in order to quell the "fervor of the ignorant, whom some have tried to deceive under the pretext of religion."[64] An 1826 pamphlet was more explicit when it described the pulpit as "the drum of the clergy, at the beat of whose subversive and anti-republican preaching the entire republican edifice would collapse."[65]

Rural officials seemed particularly sensitive to the power of the local parish priest. The December 1826 election of the Jala ayuntamiento demonstrates this tension. At its heart, this was a power struggle between a particular cabal of town officials and the parish priest, expressed in the new political discourse of republicanism. On 23 December, a member of the anti-priest cabal wrote to the Guadalajara See, complaining Fr. Apolonio Ruiz unfairly used the pulpit to call for the election of "Christian men who had religion," and named certain candidates to the ayuntamiento. Despite warnings against doing this, accompanied by threats he would be thrown in prison for his interference, Ruiz played the martyr. On the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, when attendance was highest, he allegedly repeated his election advice and sarcastically denounced the current ayuntamiento as "so 'scientific' they could be presidents of

[63] Arrom, "Popular Politics in Mexico City," 266–267.
[64] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. I, 309.
[65] Paraphrased in Connaughton, "Escollos republicanos," 171.

the Estados Unidos Mejicanos, governors of their own states."[66] When a pair of guards stationed themselves outside the parsonage to haul off Ruiz when he returned from the church, a mob gathered in the priest's defense. It was only dispersed when an official from nearby Ahuacatlán arrived to pacify the crowd.[67] Ruiz, for his part, left Jala pending an ecclesiastical review. The investigating cleric found Ruiz innocent of all charges of election tampering, and, at any rate, the anticlerical candidate won. But the battle did not end there for, although the cabal was installed in office, Ruiz remained as their nemesis. When Ruiz returned to Jala, the alcalde assembled a posse and confronted the priest outside his house, claiming he "had authority over the Church, priest, and ecclesiastics, and they could well leave, as they were not needed."[68] The new alcalde, of course, offered his own version of events, and mired Ruiz in yet another investigation. As he explained, the clerical investigator was incompetent, and Ruiz an abusive drunkard with a bastard child on the way. Ruiz even insulted the jefe político of Tepic, in the alcalde's report, calling him an "intrusive, rebellious law-breaker" who would soon be burning in hell. There, he would be joining Jalisco's first governor, the radical Liberal Sánchez, who had died only weeks before. And Ruiz again invoked martyrdom, stating before the gathering crowd he would die for his flock. As the alcalde asked, "what does it do to his parishioners, that he urges them on, and says he will die for them?" The alcalde was "surrounded by the most stupid ignorance" and, if the See did not intervene, he could become the victim of the "sinister enthusiasm with which this anti-constitutional priest has dominated all [Indians] and the majority of vecinos."[69] In short, priests and civil authorities were no longer co-rulers in the provinces. Whether as a tool to oust

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[66] Here, "scientific" reflects not a clerical disregard for science, but rather an accusation of elitism, perhaps reflecting these candidates' social and intellectual distance from most of the Jala population.
[67] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1826–1827, 23 December 1826.
[68] Ibid., 12 January 1827.
[69] Ibid., 5 January 1827.

unwanted priests in a struggle for power, or out of genuine fear, local politicians cited the clergy's abusive influence over the rural majority to win state and ecclesiastical intervention in their attempts to rid their communities of a potential threat. As the constitutional system extended real political authority down to the village level, there would be no power sharing.[70]

But land reform proved the most disruptive anticlerical measure in Jalisco, despite not directly targeting the Church in most cases. In an analysis of this reform and its effects at the municipal level, a stark contrast between the laws and their implementation emerges. The reform itself was largely secular in nature. Legislators sought to break up municipal land and Indian communal identity, and rarely encompassed religious property in their reforms. But despite this secular thrust, both elite and lower-class actors at the local level adapted these land reform measures to reclaim religious property. And they did so at different times and for different reasons over the course of the nineteenth century. Social and political elites in the stratified head towns of the Nayarit frontier were the first to attempt to usurp confraternity land in the 1820s and early 1830s, and they did so to parcel it out to their cronies. But by the late 1840s and 1850s Indian groups in these towns and in smaller subject towns increasingly drew upon land reform decrees to protect their communally held sacral land—whether from hacendados or priests, as we will see in chapter 3. The clergy, meanwhile, shifted allegiances among these different social groups in their overarching goal to redefine communal land as ecclesiastical property and thus keep it outside the purview of most land reform.

[70] Notably, the Church had long jealously guarded its domain from civil intervention. When a Jala alcalde in 1754 attempted to intervene in confraternity affairs in order to officially establish the sodality, the Guadalajara See threatened him with excommunication; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 14, 9 April 1754. In the absence of any effective, nearby colonial officials, "power sharing" in the colonial period typically meant between clergy and lay brothers, as discussed in chapter 1.

On paper, Jalisco's land reforms aimed at primarily secular Indian land, and had two aims. The most important was to convert communal landholders into individual property owners, and thus build a tax base and foster the growth of a vibrant real estate market in Mexico. The secondary goal was to remove Indian class identity. That these goals were perennially important, as well as difficult to attain, is evidenced in the more than a dozen land reform decrees and legislative orders enacted from 1828 to 1852.[71] The cluster of laws promulgated in the late 1820s and early 1830s had high ambitions. Decree 151, enacted in mid 1828, was the state's first disamortization measure.[72] It proposed to divide all the land purchased in common by "those who were formerly named Indians," distributing it in equal portions among families, widows, and orphans in that class.[73] A subsequent decree in 1830 included urban properties within D. 151's purview.[74] More aggressive measures passed in 1833. Decree 481 placed all remaining communal land under the domain of the constitutional ayuntamiento, not any informal Indian ruling bodies.[75] Two months later, Decree 486 mandated that if D. 151 still had not taken effect in some communities, they were required to divide their land by the next year.[76] And coinciding with the contemporaneous anticlerical assaults on the Mexican Church at the national level, Jalisco in late 1833 enacted

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[71] Decrees 151, 228, 186, 288, 381, 420, 481, 486, 39, 69, 90, 121, and 242, as well as the legislative orders of 13 March 1829, 17 February 1830, and 21 July 1847. The Archivo del Poder Legislativo del Estado de Jalisco in Guadalajara has a keyword-searchable database of the state's legislation from the First Mexican Empire through the nineteenth century, as well as a full set of the *Colección de los decretos* volumes.
[72] Previous measures, such as Decrees 2 and 20 of early 1825, simply granted formal title to those Indians who privately held property in usufruct and prevented Indians from acquiring further communal land; *Colección de los decretos*, vol. I, 460–464; and ibid., vol. II, 78–80.
[73] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. III, 288–292.
[74] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. IV, 156–157.
[75] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. V, 459–460.
[76] Ibid., 471–474.

Decree 525, its own ecclesiastical disamortization decree.[77] This measure in many ways anticipated the more famous national disamortization decree of 1856: it relied on "popular action" to denounce all Church property that was not properly sold off in a timely fashion, and renters were given preference in subsequent land sales.[78]

With these measures, Jalisco cemented its role as the vanguard of Liberal innovation. Liberal theorists in this early period frequently complained that Mexico was merely a conglomeration of different groups with opposing allegiances, none devoted to a unifying ideal. The persistent Indian class distinction and the Church, along with the military, were directly responsible for holding back a national spirit. A "corporate spirit" reigned, and Jaliscan legislators sought to dismantle those corporations for the government's survival.[79]

But a change in regime overtook these plans, and the radical measures of the 1820s and 30s were retracted amid reports that land reform had been poorly implemented. Acting president Valentín Gómez Farías's anticlerical reforms were sufficiently unpopular in the rest of the country to bring Antonio López de Santa Anna back to office, and resistance to his return from Jalisco and a few other state militias was quickly put down. The regime transitioned from federalism to

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[77] In response to the execution of Vicente Guerrero in 1831, a civil war in 1832, and a series of revolts in favor of "religión y fueros" in 1833, acting president Vicente Gómez Farías and a radical congress directly attacked political enemies and clerical power in 1833. In six months' time, congress enacted another expulsion decree, secularized the California missions, closed Church-run universities, ended the civil enforcement of the tithe and monastic vows, and reinstated the patronato and ordered the government to prepare to erect state-based dioceses. Moreover, paving the way for a disamortization decree, a congressional committee submitted a ruling prohibiting the further sale of corporate property until the national congress determined its fate; Sordo, "El congreso en la crisis del primer federalismo," 123–125; and Vázquez, "Introducción," 31–32.
[78] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. VI, 164–178.
[79] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism*, 114.

centralism in 1835 and land reform came to a standstill. Jalisco' Decree 546, for instance, suspended all Indian-land redistribution decrees until the government could decide on a more effective measure, armed "with better information" from the field.[80] The reports were dismal, and universally complained of incomplete redistribution. The frontier towns of San Luis, Pochotitlán, Ahuacatlán, Camotlán, and Ixtlán still retained communal land in 1842.[81] The next year, the Tepic ayuntamiento suspected some of its own municipal land had been usurped due to the "confusion and disarray in which [the legislation] has remained for many years."[82] Across the Sierra in Huajimic, it seemed as if there was "neither uniformity in implementation, nor all the effort required by such a transcendent affair."[83]

Driven both by these failures and multiple Indian insurrections toward midcentury, the decrees of the 1840s were more politically ambivalent than their radical predecessors and sought to appease Indian rebels as much as transform them into individual property-holders. At the heart of this legislation was the notion that land conflict was at the root of most, if not all, rural rebellion. While Decree 39 ordered that the land distribution halted by D. 546 be restarted, for instance, legislators had adopted a more conservative stance toward Indian identity. Gone was the liberal hope that Indians would disappear by privatizing the land of those "those who were formerly named Indians." Instead, according to a circular accompanying D. 39, the "indigenous class…which suffered much since the conquest of the new world and the remains of which continue to exist today among us," deserved "the protection of all philanthropic governments."[84]

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[80] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. VIII, 110–111.
[81] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 79–81.
[82] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. VIII, 401.
[83] Ibid., 330.
[84] Ibid., vol. X, 254–255.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the U.S.-Mexican War, peasant rebellions erupted across the country in the most widespread mobilization since independence. An army deserter led an anti-hacienda campaign in the Sierra Gorda in 1849, encompassing the states of Querétaro, Guanajuato, and Hidalgo. The Yucatán government essentially collapsed as Maya peasants began a bloody, half-century-long rebellion, in 1847. Zapotecs in Oaxaca rebelled and controlled the commercially significant Isthmus of Tehuantepec beginning that same year.[85] Clerical authorities in Tepic reported rumors of rebellion in the Sierra del Nayarit in 1849.[86] Thus Decree 121, promulgated amid these movements in 1849, did more than pay lip service to this "indigenous class." It permitted Indians to continue owning land "as a society" (although they could not acquire more in that manner), and it expressly excluded all ecclesiastical property from the disamortization order.[87] Later during the Reform War, the Jaliscan legislature permitted targeted land redistribution in order to quell insurrection. Authorities drew upon Decree 25 in 1858, for example, in order to send land-measurement commissions to San Luis, Pochotitlán, Xalisco, Tequepexpan, and "all the others of this canton that have pending litigation with hacendados." A fair and just redistribution of the disputed territories, it was hoped, would prevent "the bandit Lozada" from gathering more recruits under his "criminal flag."[88]

But if Jaliscan lawmakers did not focus much attention on ecclesiastical property, actors at the municipal level certainly did during the first half of the nineteenth century. Political elites and Indians along the Nayarit frontier, for example, used land reforms to take control of confraternity territory. These maneuvers came in waves. In the 1820s and 30s, town officials aggressively

[85] McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*, 30.
[86] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857.
[87] Articles 24 and 26, *Colección de los decretos*, vol. XI, 302–303.
[88] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 111.

pursued confraternity plots both for their personal use and to undermine the local priest's authority. Decree 2 in 1828, for instance, formed part of the Jala ayuntamiento's broader arsenal against parish priest Apolonio Ruiz. As discussed above, the ayuntamiento had antagonized Ruiz for years, denouncing him before the Guadalajara See and regional political authorities for alleged abuse and meddling in politics. Beginning in 1828, those attacks shifted to the agrarian domain as members of the ayuntamiento usurped territory allegedly belonging to a local confraternity and hospital and divided it among themselves and other elites under the auspices of D. 2. This was an uphill battle for Fr. Ruiz. As was common for confraternity property in this region, the priest did not hold title to the land. Furthermore, both Ruiz and numerous other witnesses testified that the fruits of the land did not directly fund the cult of Our Lady. The plot was rented out, and the annual payment—a portion of the harvest—instead provisioned various functionaries in town government and the sodality, as well as other undefined confraternity affairs.[89] All witness agreed the land was named for the virgin, but that it legally pertained to the *fundo legal*.[90] The Church ultimately lost the property. One of Fr. Ruiz's successors in the parish reported that the town council successfully usurped more ecclesiastical plots in 1833, likely through the disamortization decree published that year.[91] And another priest in 1839 reported he

[89] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1826–1827, 8 Nov. 1828.
[90] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1828–1860, 9 August 1828. See chapter 3 for further discussion of this case.
[91] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1845–1849, 9 Feb. 1845. The Church lost property in numerous towns across the frontier due to the 1833 law. The parish priest of Santa María del Oro reported such a loss in Tequepexpan, for example; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 21, carpeta 15 Oct. 1841, 2 Jan. 1841. Moreover, the same priest reported an 1837 attempt on confraternity land in the parish seat, which was likely done in accord with the 1833 law; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 25, 20 April 1852.

was still pursuing the return of four small plots and a larger property that the town government had taken over some years before.[92]

Then, just as state legislators abandoned radical land reform in the 1840s and began offering concessions to the "indigenous class," so Indian groups began to use specific land reforms to appropriate confraternity property. Indians in Tequepexpan, for instance, sold confraternity cattle to pay for a land dispute with a nearby hacienda in 1848 through a misinterpretation of Decree 39 and its amendments.[93] And a year earlier in Santa María del Oro, the ayuntamiento tried to use the obsolete Decree 151 to wrest control of a plot belonging to the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The priest in this case was able to successfully defend the property. But unlike the previous attempts at usurpation by town governments, which had only limited, if any, support from lower-class groups, the Santa María del Oro ayuntamiento enjoyed a broad base of support. Indeed, claimed the priest, the council had attempted to take the property to distribute among "the indigenous of this town, as community territory."[94] Moreover, the plot's later history demonstrates further this popular support, as discussed in chapter 3.

On the whole, the Jaliscan state government sought to subject the Church to greater civil control in the early postcolonial period, just as its Bourbon predecessors had attempted. A cash-strapped state attempted to commandeer the tithe; put the clergy under closer oversight by assuming the patronato; and open up communal *cum* Church land holdings to the real estate market. And even

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[92] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1828–1860, 3 April 1839. Fr. Ruiz mentioned in 1828 that the ayuntamiento had divided the contested territory into four small plots; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1826–1827, 8 Nov. 1828.
[93] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 21, carpeta 15 Oct. 1841.
[94] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 22, 22 Nov. 1846.

if these early measures were ineffective at the state level, at the municipal level many rural officials took on anticlerical tasks with gusto, burdening priests with constant investigations and legal defense of ecclesiastical property.

But hostility between the two powers ebbed during the late 1830s and 40s. The disputes over the patronato and the tithe fell away in Jalisco, and ecclesiastical property was excluded from later land redistribution measures. Even the standoff over an ecclesiastical loan in 1847, which prompted the Archdiocese of Mexico to directly fund insurrection, did not have a counterpart in the Diocese of Guadalajara. Instead, the Jaliscan government and the Guadalajara See embarked upon a period of détente following the fall of Valentín Gómez Farías in 1834. Specifically, an opening at the national level in the 1830s allowed many members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to officially enter the political sphere. This political shift in turn exerted pressure at the parish level, and clergy along the Nayarit frontier entered local politics. And while Church-State hostility was renewed in other parts of the country beginning in the late 1840s, limited cooperation continued in Jalisco. This cooperation would last even into the early Reform era, as a clerical policy of selling off confraternity land quietly continued while prelates in other dioceses were thundering against the national disamortization decree of 1856.

First, with a centralist regime in Mexico came the reinstatement of corporate privilege. Although only 15 percent of the legislators in the first constituent congress were ecclesiastics, the majority were cathedral chapter members, and together they formed an impressive lobby. Among them was the future first bishop of the San Luis Potosí diocese, the future bishop of Puebla, and Pedro

Espinosa y Dávalos, the future bishop and first archbishop of Guadalajara.[95] So quickly did this congress revoke most of Gómez Farías's anticlerical measures, in fact, Santa Anna counseled one delegate, Carlos María Bustamante, to restrain his colleagues. As he explained, Bustamante should attempt to

> "convince those ecclesiastic gentlemen it is necessary to yield to reason, and circumstances; the enemies of order merely seek pretext to discredit the current order of things and what they most propagandize is that we are retreating back to the previous century…it is better to gain only something, than to lose everything."[96]

Honoring a friendlier state of affairs, Gregory XVI recognized Mexican independence the next year in 1836. Amid a dizzying array of congresses and juntas over the next decade, two lifted the restriction against prelates holding office. And, although clerical participation was low in comparison to the federalist republic, that participation was overwhelmingly elite. In the two congresses in which prelates could hold office, an average of 74 percent of elected clerics came from the high clergy.[97] The 1830s and 40s witnessed both the secularization of Mexican politics, but also the reassertion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy acting on behalf of corporate interests.

Second, this tentative rapprochement between the Church and the civil government exerted pressure at the parish level. On December 18, 1845, Santa María del Oro priest Victorino Nuñez reported to the Guadalajara See he had complied with its request to celebrate three Masses "with supplications" for the new government. Although he does not mention the government by name, he is likely referring to that of Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga, who had pronounced against the acting president only four days before. Notably, Paredes would ultimately permit the

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[95] Sordo Cedeño, "Los congresistas eclesiásticos," 574.
[96] Ibid., 575–576.
[97] Ibid., 577.

ecclesiastical hierarchy to serve in the 1846 congress. Beyond Masses, Nuñez also discussed another important development in the Church hierarchy's governing apparatus: the Catholic newspaper.[98] During the interim period between the end of the centralist regime and the return of the federalist system, from 1845–1848, a number of daily newspapers began circulating the increasingly polarized Conservative and Liberal opinions of the day.[99] Among them appeared the hierarchy's attempt to enter the public debate it had avoided, to its disadvantage, in earlier decades.[100] *El Católico* and *El Ilustrador Católico Mexicano* were first printed in this period, and it is perhaps one of these newspapers to which Fr. Nuñez referred, and the subscription for which he still needed to pay. Indeed, general public opinion was not the ecclesiastical hierarchy's only target. The lower clergy, too, needed to be realigned with Church interests.

Not all parish priests exemplified well the Church's new rapprochement, and had to be reined in. In late 1843, reported a group of Jala elites, Mariano Avelar refused to celebrate the new constitution promulgated that year. As the Jala residents explain, they visited the parsonage seeking a Te Deum Mass, but "instead of hearing eulogies and praises, we heard blasphemies … uttering they were heresies and against his Religion, and that he would first give a thousand lives than swear allegiance to the Supremas Bases Constitucionales." Avelar would ultimately be jailed in Guadalajara, but more as a result of other abuses uncovered by clerical investigators.[101] Nevertheless, it is important to note how much time had changed local circumstances. In 1843,

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[98] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1846, I.
[99] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism*, 12.
[100] In the 1820s, rather than engage in op-ed debates, the Guadalajara cathedral chapter excommunicated a liberal journalist for his critiques of the clergy and clerical education; Olveda, "Jalisco y su primera experiencia federalista," 206; and Ibid., 206, n. 25.
[101] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1843–1844. See chapter 3 for further discussion of this case.

town elites assumed a priest would be willing to celebrate the installment of a new government with bell-ringing and a Mass, and complained when he did *not* participate in civil affairs. This was a far cry from the experience of Avelar's predecessor during the first federalist republic, Fr. Ruiz, whom elected officials excoriated for politicking from the pulpit.

Finally, unlike the Jaliscan government's anticlerical behavior in the first decades after independence, the state demonstrated a much more Conservative leaning amid the Church-State conflicts elsewhere during the 1840s and early 1850s. The battle over Church property during the U.S.-Mexican War offers one example. In early 1847, following two coups d'état and a regime change from centralism to federalism, newly re-installed acting president Gómez Farías promulgated a desperate fundraising measure as U.S. troops closed in. Unwilling to seek the money from a broad-based wartime tax, Gómez Farías demanded a 15 million-peso loan guaranteed with Church property in early January. For their part, the dioceses surrounding the capital area responded with outrage and rebellion. *El Ilustrador Católico Mexicano* described the law's promulgation as "a bugle call summoning the faithful to battle."[102] The bishop of Puebla excommunicated those responsible for the measure.[103] And members of the archdiocesan hierarchy made the leap into outright insurrection, handing over 2,000 pesos to Gen. Matías de la Peña y Barragán, who led a barracks revolt against the government on the outskirts of Mexico City. The archdiocese would ultimately provide some 90,000 pesos to de la Peña's cause, dubbed the "Polkos" rebellion in a lampoon of rebels' supposed aristocratic leanings.[104] But the Jaliscan state government chose instead to forestall this reaction and shielded the Guadalajara See from

[102] As paraphrased in Costeloe, "The Mexican Church and the Rebellion of the Polkos," 171.
[103] Connaughton, "El ocaso del proyecto de 'nación católica,'" 242–243.
[104] "Polko" referred to the dance popular among the capital's aristocrats, the polka; Costeloe, "The Mexican Church and the Rebellion of the Polkos," 175.

the measure by suspending the decree at the state level.[105] The state legislature continued this trend by excluding ecclesiastical property from land reform in 1849, as discussed above. And in 1856, the legislature again shielded the Guadalajara Church from the Lerdo Law.

Overall, an analysis of the Lerdo Law in Nayarit demonstrates the measure was not a major catalyst to Conservative rebellion in the region, but rather provides another example of the détente—however temporary—between the Jaliscan state government and the Guadalajara See. The national disamortization decree of June 25, 1856, was named the Lerdo Law after its progenitor, Finance Minister Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. Essentially, the law prohibited most corporately owned land, whether by civil or religious bodies, and forced such existing real estate onto the market. This was not a nationalization decree. The corporation was permitted to retain its wealth, but was forced to transfer its wealth from real estate to investment. The decree favored renters of these corporations' lands and buildings. Tenants were given three months to seek adjudication of the property in their favor, and the purchase price would be calculated from the current rent: such rent represented a six-percent annual interest payment on the capital. If the renter of a small urban home paid 15 pesos a year, for example, the new purchase price under the law would be 250 pesos. If the renter did not seek adjudication within three months after the law was promulgated, subrenters were given the opportunity to purchase the property. If there were no subrenters or he/she passed on the sale, anyone could denounce the real estate and purchase it out from under the current tenant.

[105] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. X, 83–85. The states of Durango and Mexico also suspended the decree; Costeloe, "Church-State Financial Negotiations," 102, 104.

Municipality[106]	**Civil**	**Ecclesiastical**	
Tepic	27,344 pesos	49,315	
Jalisco	5,265	4,166	
Santiago	1,925	--	
Palo Alto	--	949	
Compostela	--	9,305	
Total	$34,534 (35% of total)	$63,735 (65% of total)	$98,269[107]

Table 1: The Value of Extant Land Adjudications in the Jurisdiction of Tepic under the Lerdo Law, 1856[108]

There are three significant conclusions to draw from an analysis of the 205 extant land adjudications made under the auspices of the Lerdo Law in the canton of Tepic in 1856. First, land was denounced infrequently in the region. The vast majority of corporately owned land was purchased by the renter. Virtually none of the sales of civil property went to anyone other than

[106] The distinction between municipalities is somewhat blurry in the records. A few single confraternity land adjudications comprised multiple ranches and haciendas in various municipalities, for example, but were lumped together under the jurisdiction of Tepic. Aside from the totals, the numbers here should act merely as a guide to the significance of the municipality, where Tepic was the municipality with the most property to lose. The "nil" figures, however, remain accurate: there are no extant records of adjudications of ecclesiastical property in Santiago, and none of civil adjudications in Palo Alto or Compostela.

[107] This figure represents 84% of the total property value adjudicated in Tepic's seventh canton and submitted to the state government by *escribano* Vicente Gonzalez (117,264 pesos), according to aggregate data reported by Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 150.

[108] This table is the compilation of data found in 205 land adjudications made under the auspices of the Lerdo Law in the canton of Tepic in 1856. The 205 adjudications are comprised of 190 *actas* prepared by Tepic notary public Vicente Gonzalez (187 from October 25–December 26, 1856), as well as 13 actas presented directly before the Juzgado de Primera Instancia in Tepic (November 3–December 24, 1856) and two before the Juzgado de Primera Letra in Tepic, all housed in the AHEN. These actas represent all extant adjudications made in Jalisco's seventh canton of Tepic.

the current renter. There were a few denunciations of ecclesiastical property under the Lerdo Law (six out of a total of 38 sales), but for the most part, longtime renters sought adjudication.

Second, the civil property that was sold off was primarily urban, and the small communities along the frontier of the Sierra del Nayarit were unaffected. Of the 167 total secular holdings, 138 constituted houses or *terrenos urbanos* (larger urban plots). The sale prices for these properties reflect this distribution. Eighty-five percent, or 139, were below $200. In contrast, the lowest price for an ecclesiastical holding was $250, while 29 sales (or 76 per cent) were priced at $500 or above. And the rural civil sales overwhelmingly came from the Tepic hinterland. Towns such as San Luis, Pochotitán, Tequepexpan, Jala, and Santa María del Oro apparently did not suffer any loss. One exception was Camichin, a small ranch outside Xalisco, which lost a significant stretch of land in 1856 and later supplied troops to Lozada's forces.[109] Nonetheless, there is no evidence that the 1856 sale, to Tepic newspaperman/renter Miguel García Vargas, was opposed.[110] García Vargas, in fact, founded the first newspaper in Tepic, which advocated the district's secession from the state of Jalisco as early as 1846—a cause that Lozada helped bring to fruition.[111]

Third, while confraternities lost extensive rural property under the Lerdo Law adjudications—in some cases comprising entire ranches and haciendas—these sales did not affect frontier communities, either. All but one of the sales of ecclesiastical property concerned large swathes of rural terrain devoted to livestock-raising or agriculture. These 37 rural ecclesiastical sales

[109] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 127.
[110] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 1, folio 183.
[111] López González, *Nayarit: historia del periodismo*, 2–3.

totaled $59,435, or 93 per cent of total sales of Church property. But the vast majority of this property pertained to the Tepic brotherhoods, long since passed out of Indian hands and into those of urban, well-to-do renters.[112] Indeed, the Lerdo Law hardly triggered a reaction from Indian communities outside of Tepic. A Santa María del Oro priest in November 1856 mentioned that one confraternity rental property "had not lacked . . . those who have denounced the property" according to the Lerdo Law, but in this case the aggressors were the cofrades themselves.[113] In only one instance yet uncovered did an Indian community resist a Lerdo Law adjudication, when the cofrades of a Zapotlán brotherhood opposed a local elite's attempt to include the livestock in the sale of their confraternity land in October 1857. They lost the case when they fled to the hills and subsequently failed to present themselves before the judge.[114] While a direct connection cannot be drawn between this resistance to a Lerdo Law denunciation and rebellion, it is notable that Zapotlán had contributed some fighters to Lozada's movement by 1865.[115] But for the rest of the towns along the Nayarit frontier to the south and east of Tepic, the Lerdo Law was merely yet another decree in a series of land redistribution measures that had begun in the first decade after independence. Furthermore, most of the territory that these towns did fight over had already been alienated by the summer of 1856 and they had already begun the process of fighting for its return, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

For the Church, the Lerdo Law merely impelled the Guadalajara See to accelerate its longstanding policy of divesting itself of real estate. Continuing in fits and starts since the late

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[112] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 146.
[113] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 25, carpeta April 20, 1852, November 10, 1856.
[114] AHEN, Jueces de Primera Instancia de Tepic, Ignacio Cruz y Francisco Pintado, 1856–1859, folios 248–256.
[115] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 127.

eighteenth century, the Nayarit clergy gradually took over confraternities and sold off the land and livestock in an attempt to protect ecclesiastical wealth from cofrade abuse. While the effects of this policy will be examined in the following chapter, suffice it to say here that the national disamortization decree prompted the Guadalajara hierarchy to hastily finish that process.

It was able to do this to at least a limited degree due to tacit cooperation from the Jaliscan state government. One month after the Lerdo Law was promulgated nationwide, the provisional governor of Jalisco issued a moratorium on all alienations of Church property under any circumstance, citing "some alienations of ecclesiastical property [exercised] without the conditions and requisites that in [the Lerdo Law] are required."[116] These irregular alienations apparently did not occur in Tepic, where the law was not enforced until late August when the head of the city's town council kicked things off by purchasing two plots of the town's ejidal land.[117] But during the months of August and September, no ecclesiastical territory was alienated under the Lerdo Law, as shown in graph 1. Church property was only adjudicated beginning in October of that year, after the statewide moratorium was lifted.[118]

Meanwhile, more than a dozen people from the canton of Tepic alone solicited Bishop Espinosa to sell confraternity land totaling 34,020 pesos, and the prelate approved sales amounting to 18,550 pesos before October as shown in graph 2. These sales technically violated the statewide

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[116] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. XIV, 96.
[117] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 1, folio 162.
[118] This likely occurred in late September. On September 15, Jalisco's interim governor petitioned Pres. Comonfort to halt alienations of municipal land, as well, but the national minister of finance turned this down September 26; *Colección de los decretos*, vol. XIV, 124–125, 134–135. A rejection of the state's moratorium of ecclesiastical sales likely followed soon afterward, but there is no record of this.

moratorium on ecclesiastical land alienation, but were nonetheless recorded by notaries public in Tepic. It seems likely that the Church had nothing to fear from the provisional governor, and may have had a tacit agreement with state authorities to conduct land alienations on its own terms while the Lerdo Law was being settled nationwide. And the bishop did attempt to control to a certain extent these alienations. Espinosa rejected nearly as many sales as he approved, for various reasons ranging from accounting errors in the application to the consideration that such a sale would do more harm than good to the confraternity in question.[119] But the bishop nevertheless succumbed to the strained circumstances, and approved other sales at deeply discounted rates. In one sale occurring in Aug.–Sept. 1856, for instance, Bishop Espinosa y Dávalos agreed to sell a portion of a ranch for $4,300 less than he claimed it was worth, apparently resigned to the fact the renter *cum* buyer could have the land adjudicated for even less if the statewide moratorium was lifted.[120] The 18,550 pesos in sales approved before October 1856 totaled nearly one-third the value of all compulsory ecclesiastical sales under the Lerdo Law.

[119] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Tepic, caja 1, carpeta Tepic: Varias, 1856.
[120] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 3, folios 725, 726.

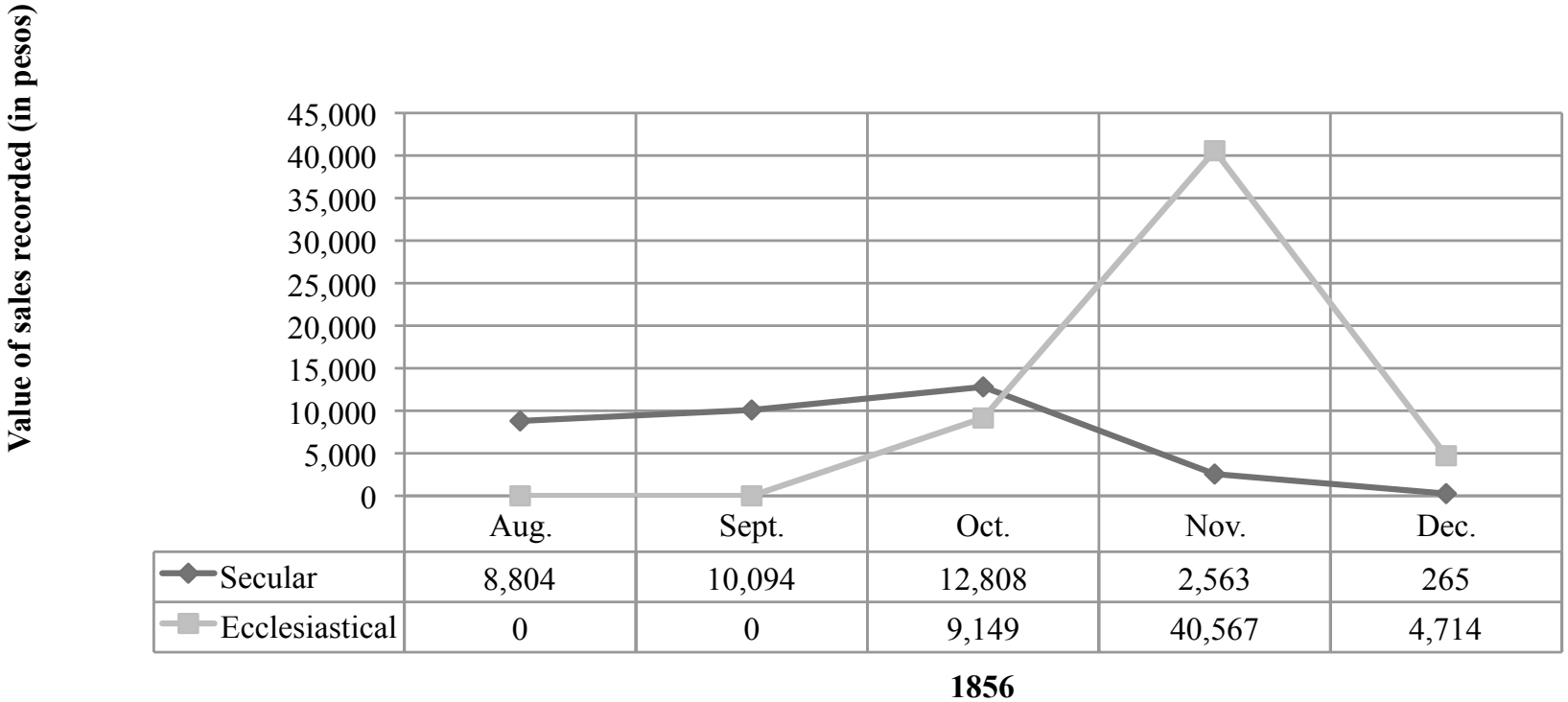
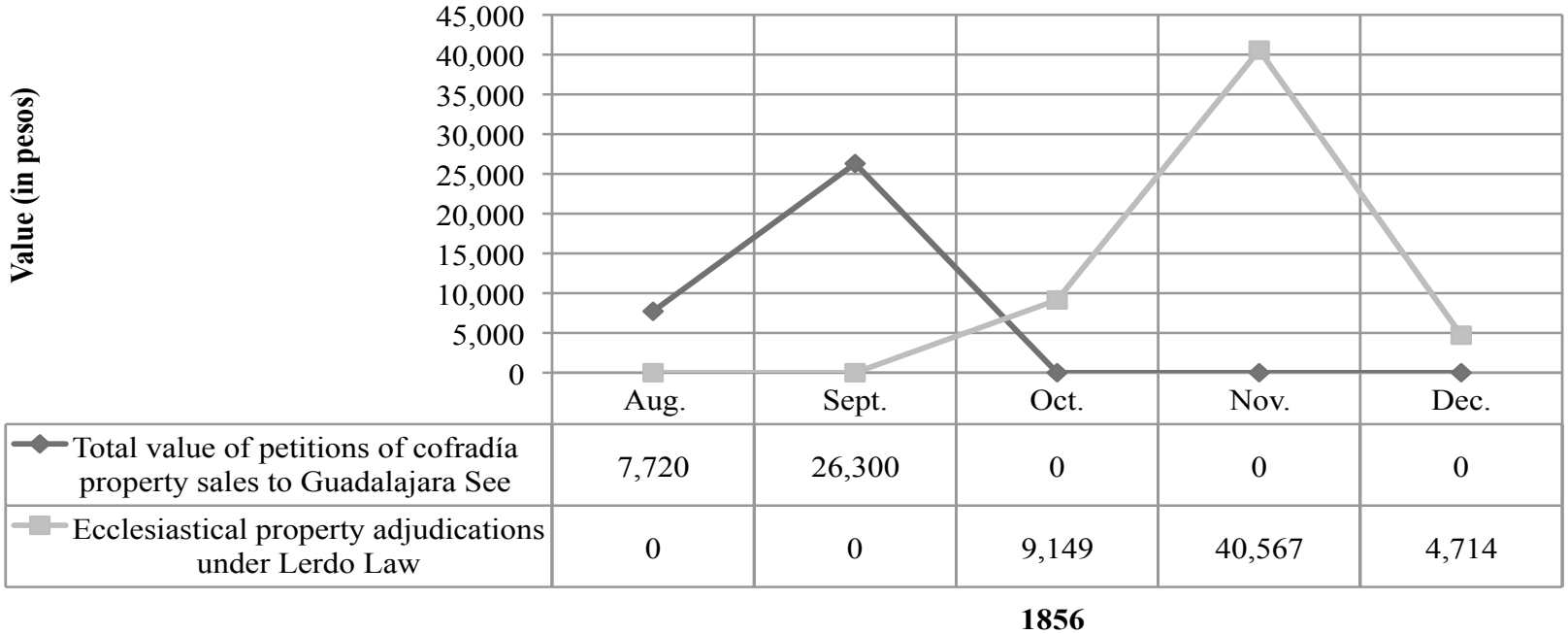


Figure 3: Secular and Ecclesiastical Land Adjudications under the Lerdo Law



	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Total value of petitions of cofradía property sales to Guadalajara See	7,720	26,300	0	0	0
Ecclesiastical property adjudications under Lerdo Law	0	0	9,149	40,567	4,714

Figure 4: Temporal Distribution of Ecclesiastical Land Sales and Adjudications under the Lerdo Law

For its part, the Guadalajara See took a remarkably moderate stance toward the early Reform decrees. Bishop Espinosa permitted priests within his diocese to comply with the civil registry in late 1857, and wrote a letter to the state government to that effect.[121] And when the moratorium on ecclesiastical adjudications was lifted in Jalisco, many of Tepic's leading Conservatives—including the acting mayordomo of the city's combined confraternities, as well as Carlos Rivas, soon to become Lozada's second-in-command—acquired Church property via the new law.[122] That they did so without fear of excommunication suggests the hierarchy had not adopted the hard-line stance of those in surrounding dioceses.

While the Jaliscan government and the Guadalajara See had reached a working compromise in this period, the Church and State in other Mexican regions were radicalizing in an increasingly hostile dialectic. Conservatives brought back Santa Anna as dictator in 1852 in an attempt to restore stability to the government, but the aging military man's final administration was an unmitigated failure. Despite his efforts to foster national unity under a Catholic regime—supporting the return of the Jesuits, for one—the death and/or alienation of his longtime advisors and the government's chronic shortage of money led to its hasty demise. His attempted suppression of the Liberal Plan of Ayutla in 1854 further cemented his unpopularity, as he personally oversaw rebels' execution, their bodies drawn and quartered and the dismembered parts hung from trees as a warning to others.[123] As the Ayutla movement attracted more and more followers, Santa Anna left the country for the third and last time.

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[121] *Colección de los decretos*, vol. XIV, 329.
[122] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 3, folios 986, 1048.
[123] Fowler, *Santa Anna*, 300–313.

A new cohort of Liberals soon came to power with the memory of the high clergy's involvement in the Polkos' rebellion fresh on their minds, and they undertook reforms to peck at the Church's power in an attempt to prevent another clerical intervention in politics. In late 1855, justice minister Benito Juárez pushed through a law prohibiting all corporation tribunals from hearing civil cases, and all from hearing criminal cases *except* those of the Church and military. Also under the measure, any individual within those corporations could renounce his or her right to appear before the special tribunal, and instead appeal to the secular courts. Then, in early 1856, the civil government ceased to recognize religious vows. And in June of that year, finance minister Lerdo de Tejada worked out his disamortization decree. Soon after in 1857, the government mandated a civil registry of all births, deaths, and marriages, and alienated the civil rights of the noncompliant. Another measure prohibited the clergy from taking obventions from poor parishioners. Despite the vociferous complaints from numerous bishops and threats of excommunication, the government enshrined these laws in a new constitution in 1857. A vote to allow religious tolerance in Mexico was only narrowly defeated, but the new constitution did not officially recognize Catholicism as the religion of the state.[124]

Many members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy radicalized in response to these reforms, and the violence between Church and State escalated. Reacting to the promulgation of the Lerdo Law, in September 1856 Michoacán bishop Clemente de Jesús Munguía proclaimed that "whoever acquires ecclesiastical property is *ipso facto* excommunicated, and for that matter, living in a state of mortal sin and exposed to the dangers of the fires of hell and eternal condemnation."[125] The cathedral chapter of the archdiocese prohibited giving the sacraments to any who swore an

[124] Sinkin, *The Mexican Reform*, 123, 128.
[125] García, *Poder político y religioso*, 595.

oath to the new constitution, which the state required of all citizens. And a pro-clerical rebellion coalesced in Puebla in late 1856, financed in part by the diocesan hierarchy there. The Liberal regime reacted to this clerical rhetoric and violence with equal vigor. Pres. Ignacio Comonfort exiled Munguía, and personally led 10,000 troops to quell the Puebla movement.[126] In the wake of the suppression, he expelled priests; exiled the bishop of Puebla, as well; and ordered the confiscation and sale of Church property in Puebla to pay for the skirmish.[127]

This belligerence at the national level exerted pressure on the Guadalajara See to conform to a more radical position. Just before the statewide moratorium on ecclesiastical property sales ended in late September 1856, Bishop Espinosa began to uniformly reject all applications for land sales. He did so formulaically, explaining in each application that he had once agreed to sell some properties "in order to save them from the grave position in which the disamortization laws have put them," but with sentiment growing "against the Church and its sacrosanct laws, which this See jealously guards . . . all property sales have been suspended."[128]

Conclusion

From 1750 to 1850, the legal structure supporting the spiritual economy of the Nayarit frontier began to collapse. In the early colonial period, this spiritual economy thrived on informality. Flexible land allocation allowed frontereños to direct resources where they were most needed. In times of hardship, the land functioned as a secular community chest that could dole out food and

[126] Bazant, *Antonio Haro y Tamariz*, 105–133.
[127] Sinkin, *The Mexican Reform*, 133.
[128] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Tepic, caja 1, carpeta Tepic: Varias, 1856.

lend money to needy members of the community. In times of plenty, the land was principally dedicated to a hospital or particular saint, and its fruits funded religious celebration. But beginning in the mid eighteenth century, the Crown began to squeeze these communities for wealth. And, given land was the foundation of rural wealth, Bourbon reformers targeted informal land tenure in an attempt to raise funds. The Guadalajara Church, in turn, sought to formalize its holdings in an attempt to hold on to that wealth. This process only accelerated in the face of anticlerical reforms beginning in the early postcolonial period. For the Church, the process of formalizing land tenure soon turned to selling off real estate altogether by the mid nineteenth century. Other local interests, meanwhile, fought to regain control of the land and halt its sale.

Indeed, beyond horizontal pressure from other troubled dioceses at midcentury, the Guadalajara See also experienced pressure from below, in the form of parishioner rebellion. Bishop Espinosa's halt to all property sales was as much, if not more so, a response to this pressure within the diocese as it was a concession to growing clerical rebellion elsewhere against the state. And it is to this pressure from parishioners that we turn in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

Religious Conflict Along the Frontier of the Sierra del Nayarit, 1800–1857[1]

Introduction

"I've passed two frightful years due to this same gang, and was even robbed by them," wrote priest Dámaso Martínez on September 29, 1857. "I suffered all of this, but did not think my own life was in danger. Today, this is not the case . . . I believe the Indians have sold my life to them."[2]

During the nine months prior to writing this report to the Guadalajara See, the parishioners of Santa María del Oro had presented a series of demands for money in the priest's possession. Martínez had earned 400 pesos from the forced sale of their confraternity's property, and the parishioners wanted the money so they could buy back the land.[3] By August 1857, however, their attempts at legitimate reclamation, through both ecclesiastical and civil channels, had ended in disappointment. Rumors had long circulated that these "Indian" parishioners were allied with a prominent gang leader in the region, Manuel Lozada.[4] It likely came as little surprise when

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[1] Much of this chapter has been published elsewhere, in Van Oosterhout, "Confraternities and Popular Conservatism."
[2] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 29 Sept. 1857.
[3] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 25, 20 April 1852.
[4] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, 24 Jan. 1856. As for Manuel Lozada, he would soon earn the military title of "general," but here I follow the sources. Prior to the Reform War, parish priests and government officials branded him the leader of a *pandilla*, or more often the *gavilla de Álica* (referring to the Sierra de Álica, another term for the Sierra del Nayarit).

Martínez found himself huddled in his church in late September as Lozada's gang ringed the town, accompanied by the town's prominent Indians, and demanded the priest and the local magistrate come out and surrender. Martínez was rescued only by the intervention of state troops, who scattered Lozada's gang and allowed the priest to flee.

As detailed in chapter 1, frontier parishioners were the staunch defenders of the Church in Nayarit only 50 years or so before this siege. What had transpired since then to bring frontereños to rebel against their own priests in the mid nineteenth century? To put it simply, ecclesiastical and political authorities reversed their policies regarding this hitherto privileged constituency. Beginning in the late colonial period and continuing into the republican era, the frontier ceased to be the vanguard of the state enterprise and became instead the object of reform. These reforms transformed frontier pueblos' way of life so deeply that by the 1850s many parishioners rebelled to restore their lost privileges.

I have divided this transformation in three chronological groupings. First, I examine the initial attempts to bring the frontier under stricter political control. Centuries of compromise between colonial authorities and frontereños ended abruptly when Bourbon reformers attempted to extract more revenue and secure colonial frontiers. Spain's European rivals threatened to take over frontier territory beginning in the late eighteenth century, and viceregal authorities distributed regular troops to heighten security. New military commanders effectively decommissioned soldados fronterizos. These maneuvers triggered outright rebellion. Longtime "Indian allies" became traitors as they attempted to restore the status quo ante. An 1801 uprising demonstrated frontereño disgust with the reformist government. With the independence war came another

opportunity for rebellion, and guerrilla movements destabilized the region from 1810–11. But unlike in the colonial period, when frontereño violence served to restore or reaffirm threatened privileges, in the early nineteenth century it had little effect.

Second, even as the colony fell away and an unstable political system replaced it, ecclesiastical authority remained. As discussed in chapter 2, royal bureaucrats initially pressured the diocesan clergy to clean up the innumerable informal sodalities that claimed rights to entire swathes of the countryside. Although the ecclesiastical hierarchy resisted these pressures, bishops nonetheless urged secular priests to overhaul Indian confraternities. These frontier priests removed Indian mayordomos, clamped down on "profane" festivities, and halted unauthorized loans and gifts from sodality funds. These reforms continued after 1821. Priest-parishioner conflicts over sodality property intensified both numerically and in nature into the 1850s.

Third, parishioners chose outright rebellion at midcentury in order to reclaim their lost territory. As priests bypassed mere control of confraternity property and instead dissolved entire brotherhoods in the 1840s, cofrades radicalized. Local leaders arose to channel their angst first into civil reclamation, then into violent expropriation. In this they found a powerful, if unlikely, ally in strongman Manuel Lozada. In brief, rebellion in support of local religion was at first anticlerical in nature.

Recent scholarship has shown local religion elsewhere in Mexico was just as contentious as in Nayarit. According to William Taylor, at the roots of this contention was a "greater laicization of faith," when the secular clergy was stretched thin after independence and local men and women

filled the void.[5] Moreover, as travel became more dangerous with the proliferation of gangs and pronunciamientos, local shrines and images acquired even greater significance among pilgrims over their distant counterparts.[6] As a result of this religious opening, priests and parishioners fought increasingly heated battles over the control of "spiritual capital" in the form of images, church buildings, and lay brotherhoods, as Matthew O'Hara has found in the capital area.[7] More famously, Yucatecan Maya groups threw off clerical intervention altogether and refashioned Catholicism around local leaders and cults such as that of the "speaking crosses."[8] In this time of paradoxes—when the "weakness of the institutional church [was] coupled with abundant signs of faith in action"—the fundamental issue in Nayarit was the foundation of the spiritual economy: who would maintain control of ecclesiastical property?[9]

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[5] Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images*, 166. For a definition of the term "local religion," see Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, 3. Carlos M. N. Eire does an excellent job dissecting the term in "The Concept of Popular Religion," 1–29.
[6] Taylor, *Shrines*, 177.
[7] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 101, 149–173.
[8] Rugeley, *Rebellion Now and Forever*, 3.
[9] Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images*, 168.

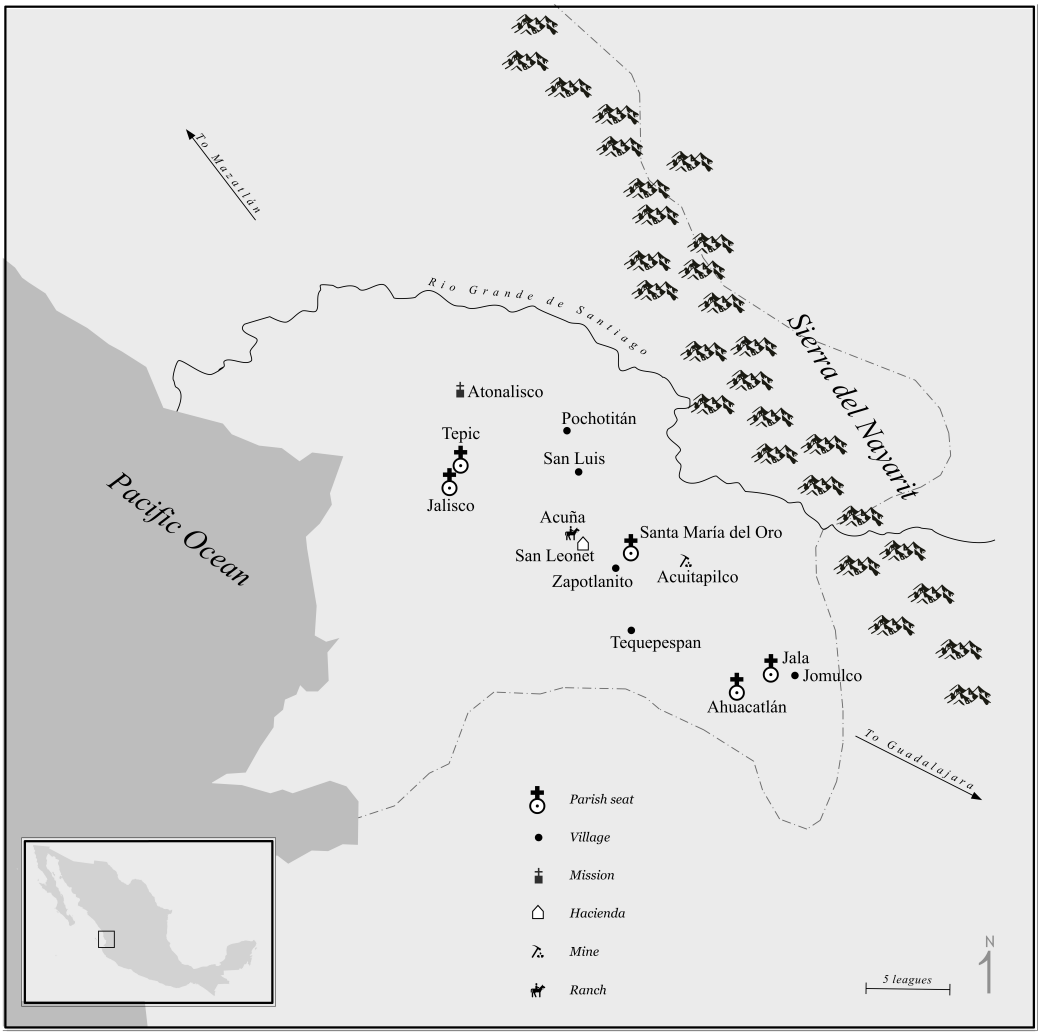

Figure 5: The Canton of Tepic, 1843[10]

Challenges to Frontereño Privilege in the Late Colonial Period and the Insurgent Response

The Bourbon reforms of the late colonial period, in conjunction with the confraternity reforms led by the Guadalajara diocese, undermined the privileged status of the pueblos along the Nayarit frontier. First, frontereños began to lose their status as "soldados fronterizos" when colonial

[10] Compiled by the author from AHEJ, Mapoteca, "Canton de Tepic, levantado por el teniente de navio Don José M. Narváez, 1824"; Gerhard, *The North Frontier*; and López, *Noticias geográficas*.

authorities sought to bolster territorial defense in the face of threats from European rivals. Whereas before frontereños' occasionally violent behavior against colonial authorities merely confirmed their hold on a difficult region, now such behavior was a danger to the empire. Large swathes of territory in the hands of inconstant troops, coupled with growing paranoia about Russian expeditions along the Pacific coast and English and French spies, led to the enlistment of Spanish, mestizo, and mulatto regular soldiers. Soldados fronterizos, meanwhile, were flattened into a mass of tributary "indios" regardless of their actual racial background.[11]

Second, cofrades lost access to Church property as priests took control of confraternity management. The Bourbon measures targeting sodality holdings had little direct effect, but they nonetheless augured a changing relationship between Church and state. Just as civil authorities worried about loosely guarded territory, so, too, the Guadalajara clergy worried about loosely controlled parish income. Priests installed mestizo or Spanish mayordomos over Indian confraternities, or simply sold off brotherhood property altogether to rescue their livelihood from irresponsible caretakers. Taken together, by the end of the colonial period crown and Church viewed Nayarit frontier privileges less as a mutually agreed-upon compromise, and instead as simply compromised.

At first, frontier groups responded to Bourbon military reforms with resistance in the courts. Félix Calleja—later the viceroy of New Spain, but then a military commander—inspected the Fronteras de Colotlán in 1790, recommending the flechero troops be phased out and replaced by dragoon companies of Spaniards, mestizos, and blacks. Nine companies had been established by

[11] Yanna Yannakakis describes a similar phenomenon in Oaxaca; Yannakakis, "The Indios Conquistadores of Oaxaca's Sierra Norte."

1792.[12] The effect was immediate. The next year, three caciques, representing the "Tlaxcaltecan Indian Pueblos of the Frontera de San Luis Colotlán," submitted a complaint against their gobernador and his lieutenant, regarding "mistreatment."[13] As they explained, their gobernador had requested to rent a ranch from their confraternity holdings, to which they ultimately agreed with an annual rent of 40 pesos. The official considered the rent too high, and allegedly began to abuse the Indians.[14] Furthermore, the gobernador then refused to let the residents of New Tlaxcala participate in arms exercises, as they "were no longer soldiers." As the caciques understood it, the colonial official was asking them to "transform into Chichimec Indians," in spite of the fact they had fought in the campaigns to keep the Real de Bolaños secure from such "barbarous people."[15] Although this particular case stretched on for years without a definite conclusion, it was clear this was the end of an era. For one, the Bolaños mines were in serious decline beginning in 1783 and nearly abandoned a little over a decade later. The local population followed suit.[16] More importantly, frontereños viewed theirs as an internal war—civilized defenders against an uncivilized foe—but the Spanish world was changing around them. With another round of European wars commencing in 1792, the Crown needed more revenue, not an unreliable force of non-tributary Indians. Frontereños' fortunes would change drastically over the next decade as one European conflict bled into another, and the former defenders of the colonial order became its enemies.

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[12] Blosser, "By the Force of Their Lives," 316, n. 77.
[13] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Indios, caja 0071, exp. 27.
[14] Ibid., exp. 24, folio 4.
[15] Ibid., folios 5–6.
[16] Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 73.

An alleged conspiracy in the territory surrounding Tepic, followed by a heavy-handed repression, demonstrated both soldados fronterizos' frustrations with legal resistance and how far they had fallen from favor. On January 3, 1801, an Indian alcalde from Ahuacatlán turned over to the local subdelegado a letter he had received, convoking "all Indian pueblos of this kingdom of the Indies" to march on Tepic two days later.[17] According to both this letter and later testimony from the alleged ringleaders, the alcalde of San Luis was set to "dispatch ten cavalrymen as color guard" to escort the son of a Tlaxcaltecan gobernador. Once in Tepic, this "Indio Mariano"

> "would be crowned in the doorway of the parish church—with the crown of Jesus of Nazareth—by the hand of the [Franciscan] Guardian of the Convento de la Santa Cruz, who would preach afterward: the reason it would be with this crown (which is silver, with thorns) is because he would come to suffer for his children. In the middle of the plaza, [a Tepic Indian *principal*] would unfurl a red flag with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe."[18]

When another, similar summons was discovered in Mazatán, a small town south of Compostela, suggesting a pan-regional revolt, the intendant of Guadalajara responded immediately. Even as Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas exhorted priests and missionaries in the region to "persuade [the Indian rebels] they could return, tranquil, to their homes," within days more than 750 troops amassed in Tepic at a cost of 55,000 pesos.[19] Over the next two weeks, colonial forces arrested more than 200 Indians from around the region. While the vast majority would soon be released for too little to no evidence, 23 would die in prison, and the alleged instigators sent to serve in public works throughout Veracruz. The "rebel district" stretched along the entire frontier; Jalisco,

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[17] Castro, "La rebelión del Indio Mariano," 347.
[18] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Real Hacienda, Alcabalas, 1801–1809, vol. 95, exp. 1, folio 52; and Castro, "La rebelión del Indio Mariano," 350.
[19] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Real Hacienda, Alcabalas, 1801–1809, vol. 95, exp. 1, folios 53–54; and Castro, "La rebelión del Indio Mariano," 349, 355.

Guaynamota, San Luis, Tequepexpan, San Andrés, Zapotán, and Jala each lost at least one alcalde to temporary exile.[20]

On one hand, it is easy to dismiss this affair as a nonevent, an outsized reaction to a rumor by colonial authorities. The declarations from the alleged ringleaders read too much like a proto-nationalist fantasy to be believed. Moreover, in the months after the initial wave of arrests, frantic letters from authorities challenged the imagination; Indian rebel armies of almost 10,000 troops, with naval support from more than a dozen British vessels, loomed in the distance.[21] One alleged plot reached the heights of fantasy, in which explosive candles would be sent to the Guadalupe shrine in Tepeyac. After those candles were lit on December 12 and with the temple in flames, insurgents were prepared to attack the viceregal palace, already mined at the corners.[22] Finally, there is simply a lack of evidence to contend with. Aside from the bishop's plea, contemporaneous Church documents ignore their Indians parishioners' supposed participation, even those penned within days of the revolt. In addition, rural priests' subsequent actions—appropriating confraternity property, for example—suggest they were not at all concerned about stirring further Indian revolt. As one skeptical bureaucrat expressed in the days following the suppression, "there is no such Mariano in the world."[23]

But on the other hand, some frontereños did respond to the call for revolution. Colonial troops came across sizable groups of Indians around Tepic on the appointed day, armed for combat.

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[20] Ibid., 358.
[21] Ibid., 352.
[22] Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico*, 98.
[23] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Real Hacienda, Alcabalas, 1801–1809, vol. 95, exp. 1, folio 47.

Beyond machetes, which would be expected of laborers, other confiscated weapons included the typical soldado-fronterizo arsenal of spears, knives, bows and arrows, clubs, and at least one firearm.[24] In addition, the rumors and circulars spreading among the frontier towns reflected frontereño desires for distinction. First, the circulars re-established frontereños' lost (or at least threatened) position as a royal auxiliary force. All Indians, young and old, were to enlist as "soldados" in the military for the new king. Second, despite the hostility against "gachupines" expressed in the letters, this was not an attempt to return the region to its pre-Hispanic past. The Indio Mariano was not a serrano monarch like the Cora legend *el Rey Nayarit*. Instead, he was reputed to be a Tlaxcaltecan descendant, a claim to legitimacy likely resonating more with the descendants—real or imaginary—of Tlaxcaltecan immigrants in the foothills, and not the Cora and Huichol of the Sierra. Third, the specific choice of a Franciscan superior performing the coronation, and not, for instance, the bishop, suggests a rejection of secular priests in the region.[25]

Indeed, the secular clergy was in the midst of its own reform campaign at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Bourbon crown's aggressive moves against the Church brought pressure to bear on the religious arrangement of the frontier. The Guadalajara bishopric sought to streamline its holdings and gain more financial control over outlying parishes.[26] The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also brought cultural change to the Church. Jansenist clergy attempted to curtail what they considered baroque excesses among "fanatic" parishioners

[24] Castro, "La rebelión del Indio Mariano," 349.
[25] Ibid., 348.
[26] For an examination of this turn of events in Mexico's capital area, see Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico*.

in an effort to reconcile religion with enlightenment thinking.[27] For cofrades along the Nayarit frontier, these political and economic moves carried increasing demands to conform to more orthodox, financially viable forms of worship. Beginning in the final years of the eighteenth century, there was a proliferation of complaints from secular priests, presenting a litany of confraternity abuses: wasteful spending on festivals, drink, and dance; insufficient spending on masses and church repair; and mismanagement of brotherhood funds. The solution: remove confraternity management from the incapable hands of their "Indian" mayordomos.[28]

Priests attempted to appropriate confraternity holdings and sell or rent them, or place them in the hands of vecino administrators with the aim of securing Church wealth—all at the order of the Guadalajara See. Following his 1798 tour of the diocese, Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas mandated that priests place administrators in charge of sodality holdings, especially those of Indian sodalities, in order to prevent the brotherhoods' extinction at the hands of their irresponsible mayordomos.[29] Although statistics are difficult to come by, many frontier confraternities had certainly suffered a dramatic decrease in property by the turn of the century. In the same year Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas toured his diocese, Jala priest Antonio Patrón warned that the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Purification would come to an end within four or five years.[30] Only two decades earlier in 1781, the brotherhood reported 1,691 head of cattle, 220 horses and mules, and annual earnings of 615 pesos.[31] Regrettably, Patrón did not provide any figures to permit a 1798 comparison, but even allowing for hyperbole, to go from the prosperity of the 1781 report to

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[27] A few studies of these complex, macro-level political and cultural shifts include Brading, *Church and State*; Voekel, *Alone Before God*; and Larkin, *The Very Nature of God*.
[28] See for example AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 18, 24 July 1804.
[29] Ibid., Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 24, 28 Nov. 1800.
[30] Ibid., Jala, caja 1, exp. 11, 13 Sept. 1798.
[31] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 26 Aug. 1777 [sic], (26 Sept. 1777).

near-extinction represented a significant loss over a 20-year period.[32] In contrast, other confraternities in the region could limp along through the nineteenth century with roughly 100 head of cattle or less.[33] The reasons for the striking Jala loss are unclear, but studies from elsewhere in Jalisco during this period point to increasing land litigation and rising religious expenses, together with a rising population and subsequent higher demand for food and drink during festivals.[34]

Facing extinction or not, cofrades in the region did not relinquish control without complaint. But in the early nineteenth century these pleas fell on deaf ears. In 1804, brothers of Camotlán's hospital wrote a letter to the diocesan seat complaining of "oppression" by their priest—Fr. Patrón, again—claiming that he "seems to want to take [the confraternity] from us." Roughly two weeks later, Patrón explained to the See that he had indeed sought to do just that. Due to the "dilapidation" of the brotherhood's goods, he had warned the Indians the year before that, if they "did not correct their wicked use of their confraternities, he would sell their goods, loan out the money, [and] rent their lands." In the same letter, Patrón recommended moving the brotherhood's cattle to Ahuacatlán (the regional civil seat) pending its sale, given the Indians' failure to comply with his demand. The See agreed, and the cattle were herded east. Although this maneuver was unsuccessful and the livestock were returned to Camotlán a few months later, a vecino caporal was appointed to oversee the herds.[35]

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[32] Still under Indian administration in 1806, Patrón estimated the total value of Purification lands and livestock to be 2,000 pesos; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 16, 31 Oct. 1806.
[33] In 1826, for instance, Santa María del Oro's Confraternity of Our Lady of the Assumption held 114 head of cattle and 26 horses. Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 15, 14 April 1826.
[34] Taylor and Chance, "Cofradías and Cargos," 14.
[35] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 18, 24 July 1804.

Cut off from the rewards of the colonial enterprise, frontereños turned to rebellion, and a guerrilla uprising flared in the frontier zone when the Bajío insurgency reached Tepic in 1810. After Guadalajara fell to the rebels on November 11, a group of 200 Spaniards and other elites, Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas among them, fled north from the capital. Insurgent priest José María Mercado pursued the caravan to the naval port of San Blas, taking Tepic along the way. Mercado would only hold the region until he was killed in January 1811, but his offensive inspired further revolt in the region.[36] Rebels from the frontier and the sierra razed a number of lowland towns and serrano missions from 1810 to 1811.[37] Insurgents around Ahuacatlán held that town a few times in this period, burning local archives and cutting off communication between Guadalajara and Tepic.[38] The royalist response was blundered, but harsh. The Tepic military commander pursued rebels from Santa María del Oro, San Luis, and Tequepexpan in July 1811, but only captured a few women and one man. In characteristic fashion, he left the man hanging along the side of the road.[39] Then, in a battle later that month, Tequepexpan rebels defeated some 300

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[36] Muriá and Peregrina, *La insurgencia independentista en Jalisco*, 88–89.

[37] The highland mission of San Sebastián Tezocuatla had been abandoned by January 1811 after depredations from both rebels and royalists; AHBZ, Manuscritos, Misiones de Nayarit, Colegio Apostólico de Guadalupe Zacatecas, caja 145, carpeta Mision de N. Sra. de Santa Ana. And Pochotitlán was abandoned after rebels descended from the Sierra and razed the town. Although the expediente does not indicate when this occurred, context suggests an early date. First, the town had been relocated as early as 1820, when this expediente was written; and second, given other heightened rebel activity in the region in 1810–1811, an early date seems likely; AIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, Primera Colección, libro 53, exp. 4, folio 17.

[38] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Operaciones de Guerra, caja 3643, exp. 007, folio 4. In 1818, brothers of Ahuacatlán's Confraternity of Our Lord of the Blessed Sacrament mentioned they had lost the titles to sodality property when rebels fell upon the town. Though they did not specify when, it seems likely this took place when rebels occupied the town in 1811; Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 58.

[39] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Operaciones de Guerra, caja 3643, exp. 009, folio 1. Insurgent leader Juan José de Zea met the same fate on the road outside Tepic; Muriá and Peregrina, *La insurgencia independentista*, 109. NB: Muriá identifies de Zea as a subdelegado of Ahualulco in 1810. If this is true, he perhaps suffered a recent demotion, as land-measurement documents from as late as 1805 still identify him as the subdelegado of the partido

royalist troops, and Guadalajara commandant José de la Cruz ordered a subordinate to arrest the captain of the Tepic Battalion and have him tried for cowardice. According to the commandant in a letter to his superior, it was difficult to overcome the rebels, who had adopted that time-tested tactic of abandoning their towns and retreating to the hills for safety. De la Cruz pledged to punish them appropriately when they returned. He reserved special disdain for Tequepexpan, home of "the most perverse Indians of New Galicia."[40] Sure enough, royalist forces soon achieved key victories in the region. Within days after the Tequepexpan embarrassment, de la Cruz's subordinate reported victory over the "gang," with more than 200 rebels killed.[41] De la Cruz ordered the town razed. Significantly, some clergy supported the rebels and they, too, were put down. A Franciscan missionary was captured among rebels around Acaponeta in 1811, and jailed. The interim priest of Santa María del Oro was convicted of treason in September 1812, and sent to complete two years of seclusion.[42] The Tepic zone was pacified by late 1811.

During the remainder of the independence period, frontereños again offered service to the Crown and regained lost privileges as a result—albeit briefly.[43] In 1814, a church official claimed the parish of Santa María del Oro—which included the execrable Tequepexpan—was quick to offer aid to royalist troops in the various expeditions they led through the parish seat.[44] And when the

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de Tepic; AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 23, folio 41; and AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 25, 14 June 1806.

[40] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Operaciones de Guerra, caja 3643, exp. 007, folios 4–6.

[41] Ibid., folio 1.

[42] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 493.

[43] Meyer claims Tepic embraced the insurgent cause, and San Luis, for one, contributed its sons to the rebellion from 1811–1818; *Esperando a Lozada*, 43, 50. While some rebel bands hid in the sierra until mid 1817, I have not yet found documents suggesting San Luis residents, or even other frontereños, formed part of these groups. In fact, the opposite is true; see below.

[44] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1814.

town leaders of San Luis sought a merced for land in 1816, they explained in their petition they were "true, faithful vassals of the sovereign," who had guarded various surrounding serrano outposts for the Crown, with no recompense, for "a long time now." The merced was granted in 1818, at a cost of 30 pesos.[45] Even the longstanding "gang of the sierra" north of Tepic descended and graciously accepted the viceroy's pardon in June 1817, offering to aid pacification efforts.[46] For frontereños, the insurgency in 1810–11 represented more a continuation of the tradition of "bargaining by riot" than a decisive break with colonial rule.[47]

But on the whole, soldados fronterizos suffered defeats on both civil and religious fronts in the last decades of the colonial period. Military officials at first rescinded privileges such as the right to practice arms exercises. More importantly, frontereños lost the significant legal benefits of claiming military service in land and property disputes. Moreover, reformist clergy attacked "Indian" confraternities and removed community-appointed mayordomos. Early attempts at outright expropriation and sale failed, but the attempts alone were enough to worry parishioners. Suddenly, higher-level authorities were unsympathetic to frontereños' plight: military and ecclesiastical officials alike sanctioned this reduction to "indio" status. Support for the Tlaxcaltecan restorer-king Mariano reflected a growing discontent in the region, even if the 1801 movement did not spark the revolution colonial authorities feared. The repression that followed further solidified that discontent, and the 1810 Bajío rebellion echoed in Nayarit. After 1811,

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[45] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 47, vol. 199, exp. 1.
[46] NB: They either had been uninterested or unsuccessful raiders prior to this date, as they accepted royalist aid in the form of food and transport following their surrender, and trade from San Blas does not seem to have suffered much since 1812; AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 147, folios 118–126.
[47] For riot as a bargaining tool, see Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*; and Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion*. For evidence of the continuation of this tradition, see Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls."

frontereños once again assumed the role of soldados fronterizos, but any benefits gained were short-lived and limited to the secular sphere. The clergy responded to the bishop's mandate, not the Crown's, and were not swayed by supposed military service. Confraternity reform continued unabated during the independence conflict.[48] Furthermore, Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas was growing wary of the new Spanish Cortes and its anticlerical decrees. When royalist general Agustín de Iturbide appealed to the Guadalajara prelate with a plan to achieve autonomy within the Spanish Empire and to preserve ecclesiastical privilege, Bishop Cabañas supplied 25,000 pesos to the military commander's cause.[49] Although rebels who had been disenfranchised by the Guadalajara See helped to initiate the independence war in Nayarit, it would be won by those who were actively disenfranchising them. The clergy would continue to exert authority over confraternity administration in postcolonial Nayarit.

The Spiritual Economy in Recession:

Priest-Parishioner Conflict in Nayarit from 1821–1852

The first half of the nineteenth century after independence was characterized by a rhythm of Church offensive and popular resistance—a spiritual "compression-decompression cycle."[50] Rather than a reaction to specific attempts at land confiscation by hostile Liberal governments, the Guadalajara Church's reform strategy was driven more by diocesan mandates and a sense of

[48] One clerical inspector "suppressed the newest and most shocking confraternity customs" in Jala and Jomulco in 1817, for instance; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 15, 6 May 1817.
[49] Rodríguez, *'Rey, religión, yndependencia y unión'*, 67.
[50] This is an adaptation of John Tutino's phrase, which he used to describe rural landownership from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth; Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution*.

political uncertainty prevalent in the post-independent state.[51] At the parish level, three broad processes emerged. From 1821 to 1830, the Guadalajara See continued the campaign to shore up Church finances it had begun in the late colonial period, cracking down on frontier confraternities.[52] Then, in the 1830s, that campaign was largely abandoned and pressure relaxed as Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas's death left the Church rudderless until the Vatican officially recognized Mexican independence and filled the vacant bishopric a decade later. Beginning in the 1840s, a new generation of clergy—ordained in an era when many learned men abandoned the priesthood for a career in politics—aggressively ratcheted up the pressure on parishioners and expropriated or sold off entire sodalities. Frontereños responded to these reforms in various ways: hiding or confiscating confraternity property from the clergy, patronizing transient ministers instead of their parish priests, and finally seeking succor in an alternative cult at mid century. In brief, as "institutional turbulence" threw the future of religious practice and its place

[51] See chapter 2. This challenges Costeloe's study of the Juzgado de Capellanías, which finds that the Church ramped up divestment of real estate precisely at those moments when federal anticlerical legislation threatened its holdings. As he explains, "From the clerical point of view it was no longer advisable to keep all assets in the easily confiscated form of property." Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico*, 123. Margaret Chowning, on the other hand, finds the Church in Michoacán actually accumulated property from 1810 to 1840 during that diocese's much longer *sede vacante*, and from 1840 to the Reform divested itself of that property and more. Notably, Chowning finds this latter divestment had more to do with a favorable real estate market than with an unfavorable political environment; "The Management of Church Wealth," 459–496.
[52] The seventh article of Jalisco's 1824 constitution, for example, granted the state government the responsibility of paying clerical salaries, effectively subjecting ecclesiastical finances to state control. The governor assumed the right of *patronato* (the ability to award benefices) in Decree 30 of 1826, and Decree 151 dismantled communally owned property of "the aforenamed Indians" two years later, in 1828. Even religious festivals were swept up: Decree 76 of 1827 forbade the use of municipal funds to foot the bill for these annual celebrations. For Decree 30, see *Colección de los decretos*, vol. 2, 237–238; for Decreto 151, see *Colección de los decretos*, vol. 3, 288–292; and for Decree 76, ibid., 14–15.

in Mexican society in doubt, clergy strove to secure their livelihood while parishioners strove to regain lost ground.[53]

In the first decade after independence, priests and parishioners struggled over the limits of each other's authority in the new political and legislative environment. What land and religious rights did the pueblo, represented by town elders, still enjoy? What was the patrimony of the priest? In Guaynamota, for instance, a chaplain attempted to circumscribe the limits of lay authority. In 1822, the town elders called for an investigation into their new mayordomo. Although they had long elected the confraternity overseer from among town residents, in 1821 their priest installed an outsider to manage the brotherhood. A year later, their herds had dropped by more than 100 cattle, from 392 to 267, and neither the new mayordomo nor the priest had deigned to explain this loss to the elders. They concluded by asking that sodality properties "be returned to the Pueblo's control," and that nothing be withdrawn "except with the approval and knowledge of the alcaldes and elders, who have ministered [these properties'] growth since the confraternities' foundation." When a Tepic priest demanded an explanation, the Guaynamota cleric sent back a diatribe critiquing the old state of affairs in his parish. In the chaplain's estimation, the Indians misunderstood the purpose of a confraternity. By demanding that all livestock sales first be approved by town leaders, the Guaynamota Indians were circumventing the clerical right to administer confraternity affairs independently of lay oversight. Which was worse, the chaplain asked: the hundreds of illegal cattle sales perpetrated by Indian overseers, or the dozens made by clerics to support themselves and the cult? Furthermore, the Indians were not official cofrades. They refused to register themselves in the sodality, "because it pains them to give a portion for

[53] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 19.

the divine cult and the wellbeing of their souls, when they pour out money for drunken binges and fandangos."[54] Although the conclusion to the cofrades' petition is unknown, the case nonetheless illustrates the changing terms of the spiritual economy. In an uncertain postcolonial environment, the chaplain felt he could no longer rely on Indian beneficence to provide for his welfare. And the town elders, for their part, lost access to what they perceived to be local funds for use in religious activities, either sanctioned or not.

Other confraternities in the region fractured under a heavier ecclesiastical hand. In 1827 the priest of Santa María del Oro jailed a leading member of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Assumption, Vicente Zavala, for appropriating the brotherhood's image and using it to collect donations, and for distributing confraternity goods. Accustomed to a more lax style of clerical governance, Zavala fired off a complaint to the Guadalajara See. Notably, he drew upon new arguments to retain an old privilege. It was not within the priest's authority, explained Zavala:

> to ask the Judges to put me in prison for defending our rights, especially today when we are free to submit whatever complaint we wish against those who injure us . . . I ask Your Honor to take the steps you find most opportune so that our Priest keeps to affairs pertinent to his ministry, and does not conspire to harm me.

In this instance, Zavala had miscalculated his brothers' willingness to alienate the clergy. Other cofrades in Santa María del Oro instead disavowed him and sided with the priest. When Zavala left town, ostensibly to seek justice before the bishop, another group of brothers submitted a letter to the See attesting that Zavala did not speak for the entire confraternity. The case ended

[54] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Guainamota, caja 1, 2 Jan. 1822.

when Zavala failed to present himself in Guadalajara; according to some of his supporters he had instead permanently left the region.[55]

Still other cofrades sought assistance from civil authorities against the clergy's maneuvers, and through seemingly contradictory actions removed the priest from the agrarian domain. On one hand, they would continue to support local clergy under fire from hostile civil authorities. On the other hand, they made their own play for control of religious worship, undermining clerical authority. In a case first discussed in chapter 2, the Jala town council attacked a local priest on two fronts beginning in 1826. In letters to diocesan authorities, council members alleged the curate's abusive drunkenness, manipulation of a "fanatic" flock, and the manner of his involvement in local elections. At the same time, they tried to force parishioners to abandon their financial support of the Church, and threatened with fines anyone who testified on behalf of the priest.[56] Parishioners nevertheless reported they secretly contributed to the cult in defiance of council pressure, keeping the church stocked with oil, for instance.[57] Three years later in 1829, however, some members of Jala's Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception did an about-face. At that time, the council was poised to take control of land that had been dedicated to the Immaculate Conception since the mid eighteenth century. At least some brothers aided the council's case in the reclamation.[58]

While we cannot know whether or not these cofrades were coerced by the town council, it is important to note that Jala's former priest, Antonio Patrón, had attempted to sell off the

[55] Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 16, 29 March 1827.
[56] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1826–1827.
[57] Ibid., carpeta 1802–1838, 28 Oct. 1829.
[58] Ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1828–1860.

Immaculate Conception's land only 20 years before, in 1806.[59] Moreover, as the cofrades testified, in the intervening years the other priest had not properly used the land rent to support the cult. It is more likely that the cofrades had found a new ally in local government to help them protect their devotion, than that they were unwillingly bending to pressure from the town council. Like Vicente Zavala in Santa María del Oro, some lay brothers in Jala relegated the local priest to spiritual matters. Priests were merely auxiliaries to their cult—parishioners would readily support their priest in his sacred duties, but should he stand in their way, the clergyman could be sidestepped in an attempt to protect confraternity property.

Broadly speaking, from 1800 to 1830—clergy on the frontier feared their livelihoods were slipping away. The edifice of the Church threatened to collapse as its foundation, confraternity assets, was crumbling, while the breakdown of Spanish rule sent tremors through the former colony. In response, priests attempted to buttress the Church at the local level by asserting control over brotherhood funds, heedless of parishioners' complaints or attempts to retain control. Parishioners diverged under pressure, as some sought help from new town councils to win back authority and others fell in line with the clergy.

But beginning in the 1830s, those who resisted priests' maneuvers seemed to win out as the Guadalajara See largely abandoned its reformist campaign. This was an involuntary policy shift. Bound by financial and political dependence on Catholics in Spain, Pope Leo XII refused to appoint Mexican clergy or officially negotiate with independent Mexican authorities to his death

[59] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 16, 31 Oct. 1806.

in 1829. By that year, not a single bishop remained in the country.[60] The Guadalajara bishopric had been vacant for more than a decade since Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas died in 1824.[61] Along the Nayarit frontier, parishioners enjoyed a period of colonial-style governance as the acephalous Guadalajara Church floundered in its efforts to complete administrative tasks. In Jala parish, for example, account books were only occasionally turned in to priests. It took Arcadio Cairo more than five years to respond to an 1834 circular requesting information on confraternity holdings. Cairo claimed not to have received the circular for years, and when he did he discovered that the books were kept with his predecessor's estate in another city. Moreover, mayordomos were either absent or slow to respond to his inquiries.[62]

At the same time, the clergy began to report whisperings of devotions operating without official Church sanction or even knowledge. When priest José María Toribio Bustamante toured the frontier region in 1830 seeking confraternity funds for a forced loan, he ran up against such a devotion in San Luis. After investigating Church records and consulting a local informant, Bustamante learned that the Indians in this town belonged to the Confraternity of Most Holy Mary of the Rosary, and descended to the Tierra Caliente each year to celebrate her feast day with their *taxtoles*, or "customs of their elders." During this festival, the vigilant priest continued, cofrades dipped into brotherhood goods (which by this time totaled little more than 30 head of cattle) for drinking binges and "all manner of immoralities," without paying for mass or

[60] Staples, *La iglesia*, 21.
[61] From 1824 to 1836, when Bishop Diego de Aranda would be appointed to head the diocese. In that interim Bishop José Miguel de Gordoa briefly filled the *sede vacante* for 11 months in 1831–32.
[62] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 8, 2 Sept. 1839.

contributing anything to the church fabric.[63] The See instructed Bustamante to enlist civil authorities to bring the San Luis cofrades to heel, although it is unclear if this action was ever carried out.

In addition, as the number of clergy declined in the early nineteenth century, religious entrepreneurs stepped in to fill the void. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1830, only 85 of the diocese's 135 parishes were filled.[64] The laity in Nayarit compensated by enlisting informal holy men. In their complaint about an absent priest in 1831, parishioners in Santa María del Oro implied that they were forced to rely on the services of "transient priests" to offer the occasional prayer or novena.[65] Such wandering clerics were a persistent thorn in the side of the parish even when priests were present. Victorino Núñez complained ten years later in 1842 that these itinerants, "commonly called missionaries," administered burials in nearby hacienda communities without displaying licenses.[66] An Ahuacatlán priest in 1831 blamed encroaching Liberalism for the decline in church burials, but it is possible parishioners were simply seeking cheaper—still religious, even if unsanctioned—alternatives.[67]

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[63] Ibid., Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 26, 22 Jan. 1830.
[64] Staples, *La iglesia*, 23–24.
[65] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1832, 17 Dec. 1831.
[66] Ibid., carpeta 1824–1846, I, 12 July 1842. These "transient priests" find their echo in the *beatos* of the late-nineteenth-century Brazilian *sertão*, most notably Antônio Conselheiro of Canudos fame. See Levine, *Vale of Tears*.
[67] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Ahuacatlán, caja 2, exp. 20, 22 Jan. 1831.

Furthermore, a growing number of homegrown assistant clergy further divided allegiances and dwindling resources.[68] In Santa María del Oro, Núñez accused a nearby presbyter of conspiring against him. This minister had taken up residence at the nearby hacienda San Leonet, where he gathered the resident population and convinced them to ensnare Núñez in legal battles over church ornaments, for example, and volunteered to minister their spiritual needs for a 50-peso salary.[69] A decade later in the early 1850s, Jala priest Antonio Galindo suggested the Guadalajara See appoint a new interim priest in his absence. Galindo had arranged the sale of local confraternity property and was about to depart for Guadalajara, but he feared the current minister would slow or halt the proceedings after Galindo left. The minister was "friendly with the opponents of this sale," Galindo explained, and "it would not be unlikely that he unite with them."[70]

In the 1830s, the Nayarit flock quietly regained control over local church funds and worship at the expense of clerical authority. A religious equilibrium was restored in the absence of a reformist prelate. Significantly, frontereños did not abandon the faith. Rather, they found (or, in some cases, continued unhindered) alternative methods of fulfilling religious needs. But this relative religious autonomy would not last more than a decade. Within a few years after Bishop Diego de Aranda took the helm of the Guadalajara diocese in the mid 1830s, clergy along the frontier would restart their campaign to bring confraternities and religious worship under tighter

[68] In discussing seminary students from around the region, Jala priest Patrón mentioned that natives of Tepic and Compostela typically took up *ministro* positions nearby, and traveled home on holidays; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1659–1799, 1799.
[69] Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1846, I.
[70] Ibid., Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854.

ecclesiastical control. Significantly for the region, the priests of the 1840s did not merely pick up where their predecessors had left off.

Instead, this new generation worked even more aggressively to take control of rural confraternities. These men entered the priesthood in a period of tribulation for the Church, when politics attracted learned sons who otherwise might have become priests. At the same time, attenuated power at the parish level made appointments to the rural clergy even less desirable. Meanwhile, many parishioners had grown up in an environment of violence, where armed rebellion was the normal method for settling differences and transferring state power. It is unsurprising, then, that a series of corrupt priests and belligerent parishioners brought the region to the brink of rebellion in this period.

Indeed, in 1849 Fr. Ignacio Castro, of Tepic, offered a prescient warning to Bishop Aranda concerning the mid-century state of affairs in the Nayarit countryside. Castro had traveled to Santa María del Oro parish to investigate claims made against Fr. Núñez and was troubled by what he saw. In his report to diocesan authorities, he asked:

> When Religion, persecuted by impiety in the capitals and large populations, seems to find refuge in rural towns, why do the priests, instead of providing good direction to the sentiments of their parishioners, have their arms raised to strike the blow? Such conduct would never be acceptable, and today it is especially reprehensible if we think of the horrors our *Patria* has begun to experience with the bloody caste war; and [recently in this diocese], … there have been some movements in Nayarit … And would it be difficult, that the many troublemakers who swarm among us would take as their execrable mission an exterminating alliance between people of the Sierra and those of the frontier, tired of suffering, and who

> lack even the support of their priests? And if the latter, with their little prudence, should contribute even remotely to such a frightening future, would it not fill your days with bitterness and pain?[71]

Regrettably for frontereño parishioners, Castro's warning went unheeded. As he warned, lay-clerical relations—and not federal anticlerical decrees—provided the principal catalyst for violence.[72]

In Jala parish, a series of priests first despoiled and then alienated confraternity property. In late 1841, Mariano Avelar was appointed to Jala parish and within two years was embroiled in controversy.[73] Self-identified vecinos and Indians alike—along with visiting priests—accused him of various crimes. As they put it, Avelar expropriated confraternity goods for the benefit of his enormous family-in-tow; charged exorbitant obventions; and, when the mayordomo of the hospital of Our Lady of the Rosary refused to hand over the weekly tithe that he was accustomed to guarding, Avelar prohibited the Virgin's weekly procession. Tension mounted in 1844, with a case coming before a nearby judge and multiple appeals to the Guadalajara See. In May of that year, a coalition of Jala leaders traveled to the diocesan seat to make certain their complaints were heard.[74] As a result, the See imprisoned Avelar in 1845. Chastened, he returned to Jala but was dead two years later.

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[71] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 30 April 1849.
[72] By "anticlerical decrees," I refer particularly to the Lerdo law, the federal disamortization decree of 25 June 1856. See chapter 2 for discussion of the law's effects in Nayarit.
[73] Although Fr. Avelar's recollection suggests he was ordained in either 1833 or 1834, he was likely ordained in either 1831 or 1832, when Bishop Gordoa briefly presided during an extended sede vacante; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1843–1844.
[74] Ibid.

Far from relaxing the tension with parishioners, Avelar's replacement, Antonio Galindo, continued the battle over confraternity property. On April 17, 1849, the Jalisco congress promulgated yet another disamortization decree, Decree 121, the latest in a series of such state edicts stretching back to 1828. While Decree 121 affected only civil property, priests—fearful of an impending land grab—reported that they were preparing as well for legal cases against Indians who sought to snatch up confraternity land.[75] Also in 1849, Bishop Aranda issued a mandate to have new mayordomos installed in the two Jala confraternities, and to force ex-administrators to hand over all confraternity goods and titles. While the vecino-led sodality willingly complied with the See's demands, Indian brothers refused. In their 1850 letter to Galindo, these cofrades cited their 1627 constitution, in which the Crown had decreed that sodality territory was not to be alienated without the brothers first being "heard and, by privilege and right, overcome." Galindo took them to court, and the brothers acquiesced later that year. To add insult to injury, Galindo then sold off a number of brotherhood cattle in order to cover the legal fees.[76]

At first, it seemed this was the end of the matter. But in early 1851 Galindo reported to the See that Indian brothers—now accompanied by three members of the vecino confraternity—were threatening the new mayordomos to force them to renounce their positions. Furthermore, they had submitted a petition to political authorities in Tepic to have certain confraternity plots distributed among themselves in accord with Decree 121. As the decree exempted ecclesiastical property, however, they had to prove the land was secular in origin. They denied the land had ever pertained to a confraternity, maintaining that it was the priest's idea to impose that title on

[75] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 6, 16 Sept. 1850.
[76] Ibid.

their *hermandad*, or unauthorized lay brotherhood.[77] When this attempt failed in the face of Church documentation of the confraternity's existence, they sent a letter to the governor of Jalisco in 1852. As they explained:

> No priest has [ever before] cursed us, and dissolved the brotherhood by taking the recognition and right that we have in the Confraternity of this Hospital—since its foundation by our elders we have never seen that which this gentleman has done."[78]

The governor was unmoved.

And, just as the parishioners of Jala struggled to maintain brotherhood land, so, too, Santa María del Oro parishioners lost control of their confraternity and local religious practices. A new priest—Victorino Núñez—assumed the curacy in the early 1840s and soon became broadly despised. His aggressive moves to wrangle authority from parishioners long accustomed to local control set them on a course for rebellion, especially at a time when banditry thrived in the region and political instability at the national level offered an opening. Núñez's behavior in Zapotlanito offers a characteristic example. Núñez and his parishioners in this small town in Santa María del Oro parish fought over a church construction project they had begun without the proper license.[79] As a result, when the town's image of Our Lady of Expectation passed through the parish seat during Holy Week in 1849, Núñez confiscated the virgin.[80] It was this action, in fact, that prompted the Guadalajara See to send Tepic's Fr. Castro to investigate Núñez. Ecclesiastical authorities lambasted the Santa María del Oro priest after receiving Castro's

[77] Ibid., exp. 19, 16 March 1851.
[78] Ibid., exp. 12, 10 Oct. 1852.
[79] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 30 April 1849.
[80] Ibid., carpeta 1824–1846, I, 12 April 1849.

report, but Núñez continued his crackdown elsewhere in the parish until his death in early 1856.[81]

These parishes and their priests were not idiosyncratic. Their similarities signaled broader, regional characteristics and trends. Castro, for instance, reported the fights between Núñez and his parishioners in Santa María del Oro could also be found across the region, in San Blas and "other points."[82] At the heart of this conflict was the continuing poverty of the frontier. As in the colonial era, priests frequently mentioned that day labor was the primary occupation of most frontereños, and even that labor did not stave off misery. One priest complained that debt peonage on nearby haciendas was driving cofrades to steal from the brotherhood, as "every year some *hacendados* recall various amounts that workers owe for the advances, and [workers] can never earn a cent."[83] In addition, the daily activities of the church relied absolutely on sodality funds. Confraternities in 1850s Ahuacatlán paid for everything from cholera relief to church reconstruction.[84] Given this penury, brotherhood holdings were essential to the local cult, no matter how small. And, by the mid nineteenth century, frontier sodality properties were scraping bottom. In Zapotlanito, the confraternity was down to 18 head of cattle by 1850. The parish seat kept only 25 head of cattle that same year.[85] Despite these dwindling resources, priests and parishioners continued to fight over these societies, as well as their aims, for their own survival.

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[81] Ibid, 4 May 1850. See below for further discussion of Núñez's maneuvers in the 1850s.
[82] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 30 April 1849.
[83] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, caja 2, exp. 19, 8 Jan. 1847. "Debt peonage," is the practice whereby an hacendado paid his or her employees in advance and thus ensured their continuing labor.
[84] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Ahuacatlán, caja 2, exp. 20, 13 Sept. 1850; ibid., 2 June 1851.
[85] Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1846, I, 30 Jan. 1849 [sic] (1850).

And, as the available pool of funds continued to shrink, priests along the frontier more desperately fought for resources. Unlike the clergy's attempts to take control of rural confraternities in the early nineteenth century—which were largely limited to installing vecino mayordomos and preventing cofrades' unauthorized expenditures—in the 1840s they plundered sodality funds and halted religious festivities. For their part, cofrades found they had little recourse in the existing civil or religious channels. State and national civil authorities respected the ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the most part in this period, and supported priests against their parishioners.[86] The Guadalajara See, meanwhile, continued to support priests' authority over confraternity property even as it reprimanded the most egregious abuses of that power. In short, cofrades stood with little to lose and much to gain by rebelling in the early 1850s.

Early Parishioner Resistance, 1852–1857

The years leading up to the Reform represent a prelude for the Lozada uprising as some cofrade groups united with local elites to violently force political and religious change in the region. Furthermore, lay men and women elsewhere along the frontier embraced an alternative cult of their own design on the parish fringes, refashioning religious ritual and de-centering the parish seat as the locus of religious activity. These early attempts would fail when civil and religious authorities stepped in to restore order and clamp down on heterodoxy. But in light of this painful failure, parishioners were all the more ready to support a gang leader's political pretensions later in the decade, provided he was willing to support their religious ambitions.

[86] See chapter 2.

As clerical interventions ramped up toward midcentury, a number of confraternity leaders arose in parishes along the Nayarit frontier and guided popular dissent into channels both legitimate and seditious. Atanasio Ramos served as an early example of this type of leader in Jala. He aligned himself with cofrade interests from the 1840s through the 1860s and served as mayordomo at least once during that period. His actions against the clergy soon earned him a reputation as a gadfly. Mariano Avelar called Ramos one of his "bitterest enemies" in 1844, just before Ramos's testimony against him landed Avelar in ecclesiastical prison.[87]

Atanasio Ramos continued the battle against Avelar's successor, Antonio Galindo. He played a vital role in the 1851 case discussed above, for instance, in which Jala's "Indian" cofrades attempted to wrest control of sodality property by appealing to the state governor. Although it is unclear whether Ramos instigated the appeal, he was the local magistrate responsible for adjudicating the appeal in the Jala court.[88] After this appeal fell through, Galindo likely thought he could undermine Ramos's credibility when he sued him in 1852 for an 800-peso debt Ramos owed the confraternity after a stint as mayordomo.[89] But Ramos had enough influence among other parishioners to plague Galindo the remainder of his tenure. When the priest dissolved the Indian confraternity later that year, a group of parishioners called for Galindo's removal from Jala in petitions sent to both the state governor and the Guadalajara See.[90] Galindo suspected

[87] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1843–44, 3 Feb. 1844.
[88] Galindo never explicitly names the "biased magistrate," but he mentions in a report to the Guadalajara See that this judge was an ex-mayordomo of Our Lady of the Purification, and had racked up debts with the sodality; AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 19, 16 March 1851. The subsequent debt case against Ramos as the ex-mayordomo of that confraternity almost ensures that he was, in fact, the magistrate in the 1851 appeal. See below.
[89] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854, 11 Feb. 1852.
[90] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 12, 10 Oct. 1852.

Ramos of orchestrating the petition, which ultimately failed.[91] This suspicion was confirmed the next month, when Ramos led the "rebellious Indians" to topple the Jala town government and install rebel leaders in their place. Frustrated by civil and ecclesiastical authorities' refusal to intervene, Ramos had seconded the Plan de Blancarte pronounced in Guadalajara in July 1852. According to Galindo, the rebels aimed at nothing more than to "take control of the confraternities in this parish and redistribute their lands and livestock," and they would have been successful if nearby authorities had not quickly moved in to restore order.[92] The bishop of Guadalajara prudently suggested Galindo drop the debt case against Ramos for the time being.[93] Despite this temporary setback, Ramos would continue to police Jala's clergy over the next two decades, and during the Second Empire worked with one of Lozada's subordinates to restore confraternity land to former cofrades.[94]

Meanwhile, parishioners in Santa María del Oro flocked to a devotion of their own making. On April 13, 1853, the police commissary of tiny Acuña ranch asked the parish priest Núñez for help protecting the "old walls" on which a 13-year-old boy had seen Our Lady of Atocha.[95] Although he does not specify when the boy first saw her, the commissary described a devotion already established in the community, complete with miracles, pilgrims, and skepticism from the

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[91] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854, 28 Aug. 1852.
[92] Ibid., 30 Nov. 1852.
[93] Ibid., 6 Sept. 1852.
[94] Juicios civiles, Ahuacatlan, caja 1, Legajo 1, no. 92, Jala, 1866.
[95] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, 13 April 1853. It is interesting that it was Our Lady of Atocha who appeared here, and not her son. Juan Javier Pescador finds veneration of the Santo Niño de Atocha spread along the Camino Real from Zacatecas to New Mexico in the early nineteenth century, while his virgin mother was left by the wayside; Pescador, *Crossing Borders*, xx, 39–76. The "child Jesus" reportedly also appeared on the walls of Acuña ranch in 1853, but he does not seem to have been the center of attention. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, 31 May 1853.

impious. In this case, the impious were local civil officials who were threatening to knock down the blessed walls. Despite these threats, or perhaps because of them, hundreds of visitors were swarming the site when Núñez arrived a week later. The priest himself claimed to have seen her on at least six separate occasions.[96] This tacit ecclesiastical approval of the apparition set off a full-fledged cult within months. According to a later report from Tepic cleric Castro, the boy was soon elevated to oracle, speaking familiarly with Our Lady and interpreting her will for supplicants. He also adopted messianic traits, choosing "11 or 12" other youths to accompany him to the hills to pray. Pilgrims would kiss his feet, receive his blessing, and carry off fragments of his clothing as a relic. Tithes and gifts were mounting at the site, and the Virgin was no longer alone. New visitors claimed to see images of St. Anthony, the Holy Burial, and a crucifix, as well as multiple other Marian advocations, with or without the child Jesus.[97]

This apparition represented one of the first tests for the new bishop, Pedro Espinosa y Dávalos. Early on, he recommended caution to Núñez, suggesting the Santa María del Oro priest neither confirm nor deny the apparition. But, as Castro's letter indicated a cult spiraling out of the Church's control and bordering on heresy, Espinosa demanded that both ecclesiastical and civil authorities crack down. He mandated that any money gathered at the site be forwarded to the See. Espinosa also exhorted Núñez to rail against fanaticism and superstition, which were "no less harmful to these towns than impiety."[98] Núñez only half-heartedly dismantled the devotion he had come to support. At first, he explained to Espinosa that it would be impossible to stanch the flow of pilgrims, as Acuña was located along the well-traveled road from Guadalajara to

[96] Ibid., 22 April 1853.
[97] Ibid., 31 May 1853.
[98] Ibid., 22 June 1853.

Tepic. Furthermore, Núñez reported, the police commissary resisted stopping the donations, undoubtedly amassing into a tempting sum. Nonetheless, Núñez fenced off the miraculous walls, placed the boy in the custody of the Acuña mayor, and declared the cult finished.[99]

Perhaps feeling relieved by the quiet resolution of the Acuña problem, Bishop Espinosa planned a tour of the northern reaches of his diocese, particularly the Sierra del Nayarit, around Easter Week 1854. Accompanied by Castro, in the mountains the bishop found piety amidst "savagery" and poverty, and called for the federal government to support more priests and missionaries.[100] Only a month after Espinosa's return to Guadalajara in June 1854, however, the Tepic prefect complained to the See about the ongoing Acuña problem. Not only had the cult survived the repression, but religious festivities were now being celebrated at a newly erected chapel on the site. The boy oracle was also still active, "deceiving people."[101] Unlike the "semi-barbarous" serranos, the Acuña believers needed a heavier hand, not missionaries, in the bishop's estimation.[102] When a resolute Espinosa ordered a local justice of the peace to intervene, the official apprehended the boy, razed the chapel erected in the Virgin's honor, and appropriated the donations offered to her.[103]

The Acuña case demonstrates the complex nature of priest-parishioner relations in the frontier region. On one hand, they had become strained to the point that an alternative cult sprang up and

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[99] Ibid., 13 June 1853; ibid., 15 June 1853.
[100] AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia Eclesiástica, vol. 158, fols. 249–250; Brittsan, "Not for Lack of Faith," 11–13.
[101] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, 2 June 1854.
[102] The quote comes from AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia Eclesiástica, vol. 158, folio 468.
[103] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, 2 June 1854.

attracted throngs of believers. Earlier paraliturgical practices—burials performed by itinerant holy men, for example, and customary rituals in the backcountry around San Luis—had been hidden and local in scope. On the other hand, the devotion only became broadly popular after a local priest legitimated it. Núñez was certainly instrumental in propagating the cult and defending the apparition, as when he claimed he had seen the Virgin multiple times. And here the irony must be noted. Even as Núñez cracked down on confraternities within his diocese, he eagerly supported the Acuña devotion. Castro, instead, recommended suppressing the movement; while the Tepic priest found a scene "superior to those presented to Chateaubriand" in Zapotlanito (as discussed above), Acuña was overcome by fanaticism.[104]

Part of the explanation for the two priests' apparently contradictory behavior may lie in the nature of the Acuña cult itself. For Núñez, confraternities occupied a separate sphere and siphoned money away from parish coffers. The Acuña devotion, meanwhile, functioned more like a satellite rich with potential profit—like the Virgin of Talpa in nearby Mascota parish, for example. Castro, on the other hand, could not entertain such dreams. The Acuña cult would only continue to draw traffic out of his parish and into that of a rival priest. At any rate, parishioners did not distinguish between the different sources of clerical antagonism in this instance. Oppression was oppression.

When authorities stepped in and quashed the movement, the already tense relationship between priests and parishioners rapidly deteriorated, and sporadic violence peppered the region. "Gangs" began a terror campaign by raping and pillaging at nearby hacienda communities, and priests

[104] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 30 April 1849.

fled in fear.[105] In Jala parish, Galindo had sold off all the remaining confraternity property to a local elite by February 1855 and fled to Tonalá, a town just outside Guadalajara.[106] And in late September 1854, Núñez received word that one such gang was headed for Santa María del Oro. He fled to Ahuacatlán and left the parish in charge of an assistant—likely a terrifying prospect for the assistant, who doubled as local justice of the peace. It was this magistrate, Dámaso Martínez, who had finally suppressed the Acuña cult and who would soon find himself besieged by Lozada's gang.[107]

Both ministers and cofrades pointed squarely at the conflict over confraternity property as the *casus belli*. But both parties arrived at this conclusion from opposite perspectives. For their part, the priests of both Jala and Santa María del Oro blamed cofrades' poor management of brotherhood funds. In the midst of his troubles with Jala cofrade Atanasio Ramos in 1853, Antonio Galindo explained:

> From time immemorial all the Indians and many vecinos of this populace . . . had enough intervention and control over the two confraternities of this parish to result in terrible administration and consequently scandalous waste, to such a degree that to this day they have been unable to compensate for the great losses suffered by these pious establishments, which would be on the upswing today if the cancer had been cut out in time.[108]

Unlike the clergy, who viewed confraternity alienation as the lamentable, yet necessary final step in protecting Church wealth, cofrades viewed such alienation as an intolerable affront to their

[105] Ibid., carpeta 1844 [sic] (1854), 20 June 1854; ibid., carpeta 1849–1857, 22 Aug. 1854.
[106] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 13, 25 Feb. 1855.
[107] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 27 Sept. 27, 1854.
[108] Ibid., Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854.

control over religious worship. It should be emphasized that, for them, violence was only the last resort in the process of restoring confraternity property. Moreover, it was not symptomatic of a decisive break with the Church, but was merely another tactic of negotiation. As had happened in Jala after the clerical appropriation there, cofrades in Santa María del Oro sought restoration from civil authorities. Peaceful attempts to win back land were preferable to violence. Nonetheless, when these attempts failed, parishioners would violently depose both purchasers and renters of confraternity land.

And with one confraternity plot sold off, the other rented out, and the Acuña devotion suppressed, cofrades in Santa María del Oro turned to violence from 1855 to 1857. Núñez remained in exile in Ahuacatlán, claiming the Indians in his parish were calling for his life. "In Tequepespan they called for me . . . ," he explained, "to coerce me with their arms and cruelties to give them what I do not have."[109] By May 1855, Núñez reported that Tequepespan had become a rebel headquarters, and his parishioners were "almost daily, with the greatest scandal, performing their military exercises."[110] A little more than a year later, the violence spread to the parish seat. In Santa María del Oro on June 20, 1856, cofrades usurped the brotherhood plot that had been rented out, threatening the new parish priest Dámaso Martínez (Núñez had died earlier that year), "that if [he] or another give an order that the renters should sow the fields, they will be deposed with armed resistance."[111]

[109] Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 27 Jan. 1855.
[110] Ibid., 14 May 1855.
[111] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 17, 20 June 1856.

In light of these threats, the Guadalajara See responded with compromise, albeit not enough to forestall rebellion. Although he had at first agreed to sell off Tepic-area confraternity land in the wake of the June 1856 Ley Lerdo, Bishop Espinosa declared a moratorium on all such sales in late September.[112] Then, in January 1857, the See signed off on the loss of the Santa María del Oro land, and the confraternity plot was legally handed back to the cofrades.[113] Bolstered by their victory over the renters, brothers then demanded return of the money from the sale of the confraternity's other plot, Laguna ranch. Here again, they followed a similar, if abbreviated, trajectory. Days before the See handed over the rented plot in January 1857, cofrades usurped Laguna ranch from its buyer, and demanded Martínez hand over half the money from its sale in order "to re-form the confraternity as before," vowing that the priest "would have no intervention." A month later, these brothers further stated that, "regarding parish obventions they [would] pay only half-price, and nothing for burials, as they say the Church is theirs."[114] In March, they demanded the full amount from the sale: 400 pesos. After Martínez demurred, cofrades petitioned civil authorities for the money. This attempt, too, would fail in August 1857.

Like Ramos in Jala, a local rebel leader in Santa María del Oro—Juan Brígido Fortolero—was behind the cofrades' increasingly aggressive moves against the clergy. But unlike in 1852, when Ramos failed in his attempt to oust civil authorities in a coup, in 1856 Brígido found a powerful ally: Manuel Lozada. In one of the last letters he wrote before he died, Núñez in January 1856

[112] See chapter 2.
[113] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 17, 20 June 1856.
[114] Ibid.

reported that Brígido had allied with the notorious bandit.[115] Vecinos who had purchased or rented the Indians' confraternity land feared it would be expropriated.[116] Indeed, it would be reclaimed within months. This alliance between Brígido and Lozada may have given cofrades the backbone (and perhaps the firearms) to threaten violence in June of that year. But while threats were sufficient to reclaim the rental plot, the Laguna ranch reclamation called for more dramatic measures. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, on September 26, 1857, Brígido and Lozada together laid siege to the town.[117]

Conclusion

In other Mexican regions, Reform-era popular Conservatism was founded upon a strong lay-clergy alliance. Benjamin Smith finds that centuries-long alliances between clergy and village caciques in Oaxaca's Mixteca Baja led to an embrace of Conservatism in the 1800s and beyond. The autochthonous clergy shielded their parishioners from unwanted intrusions by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and resisted the impulse to intervene in confraternity affairs.[118] They instead left the brotherhoods under the domain of Indian elites during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and then helped brothers covertly reorganize the confraternities as

[115] Although Lozada would soon earn the military title of "general," prior to the Reform War, parish priests and government officials branded him the leader of a *pandilla*, or more often the *gavilla de Álica* (referring to the Sierra de Álica, another term for the Sierra del Nayarit).
[116] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, 24 Jan. 1856.
[117] Lozada's forces would also occupy Jala's confraternity territory in Acuitapilco, likely invited by angered cofrades. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868.
[118] Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, 66.

"agricultural societies" after religious brotherhoods were prohibited during the Reform.[119] Guy Thomson reaches similar findings in the Puebla highlands.[120]

In contrast, in Nayarit, where a parish priest was more often than not an agent of the Guadalajara See, defending confraternities typically meant confronting this local clergyman. And after a half-century of increasingly bitter disputes between priests and parishioners, September 1857 was a watershed moment. The siege of Santa María del Oro was only one component of Lozada's first public outing as a military leader, a series of scattered raids and skirmishes throughout the region.[121] Fr. Martínez was rescued only by the intervention of state troops, who briefly scattered Lozada's gang and allowed the priest to flee. No vecino remained in the town, according to the priest: "only the Indians, as they are united with Lozada." Martínez left an assistant in charge of the parish. This was likely another Indian, as he was someone Martínez knew "was not at risk" with the gang.[122] This alliance between Lozada and cofrades would last for years. Following a punitive expedition by government forces in October 1857, frontereños from Santa María del Oro, Jala, and Tequepespan co-signed a pronouncement under the authorship of Andrés Rosales, one of Lozada's subordinates.[123] Cofrades and other active parishioners there, along with many others in the frontier region, would form the base of Lozada's forces and gain concessions in return until his execution in 1873.[124] Fr. Martínez soon returned to Santa María del Oro and

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[119] Ibid., 67, 174.
[120] Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla," 244, 247.
[121] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 37–38.
[122] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 29 Sept. 29, 1857.
[123] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 153–154.
[124] A number of signatories to a late 1867 pronouncement, for instance, also appear in contemporaneous church documents from Jala, Jomulco, and Santa María del Oro. The pronouncement is found in Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 200–206. "Eusebio Plodo,"

continued to minister that parish at least through the Reform War. But from 1857 onward he owed his continuing presence to *lozadistas*. As will be discussed in chapter four, priests in Nayarit continued to condemn heterodox religious festivities and rituals, but there was little they could do to stop it. Lozada and his forces would reform the Nayarit church from the inside.

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from Jomulco, appears in a series of documents related to a dispute over clerical replacement that same year. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868, 10 May 1867; ibid., 27 June 1868. "Antonio Cambero," from Jala, signs his name to the same dispute. Ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, 18 May 1868. "Antonio Rodríguez," from Santa María del Oro, appears in an unrelated clerical dispute. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 15 Jan. 1866. "Ysidoro Jacobo," from that same missive, shows up at the head of 300 men in Lozada's 1873 campaign. Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 322–328. Regarding concessions, the "indígenas menesterosos" of Jala sought—and received—a rearrangement of *fondo municipal* disbursement in 1863 through a land commission appointed by Lozada. AHEN, Juicios Civiles, Ahuacatlán, caja 1, leg. 1, no. 92, folios 13–14. Throughout the case, no mention is made of Jala confraternities, or any religious ends of the land, for that matter. Nonetheless, this land redistribution seems to represent the Immaculate Conception reborn as a secular institution. The majority of junta members appear elsewhere in various appeals for church reconstruction and processions, and general confraternity affairs. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 6, 16 Sept. 1850; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, 14 July 1861; ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854, 29 May 1854; ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, 28 Dec. 1873.

CHAPTER 4

Religion, Land, and Politics in Manuel Lozada's Rebellion, 1854–1873

Introduction

Fr. Francisco Valadéz was thrilled. Even as the rest of Mexico seemed to be embroiled in a permanent civil war between those who supported the Church and those who sought to dismantle it, his parishioners seemed to have made the right choice. He expressed his joy in a letter to the Guadalajara See, October 14, 1866:

> "Besides the fact that numerous people gather daily for the prayer of the rosary of Most Holy Mary … on Sundays boys and girls gather for school, for catechism and doctrinal exercises that I conduct in the afternoon, and not only this, but numerous people frequent the Holy Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist, principally in days of indulgences. All of this brings consolation, and more so in this epoch of indifference. … And as the circular jubilee came to this parish in the days of the mission, I celebrated it with inexplicable pleasure in my soul, seeing the multitude of people who fulfilled it."[1]

The diocesan secretary who read the report was likely pleased, as well. After all, Valadéz ministered to the notoriously troublesome Jala parish. As recently as 1860, Manuel Lozada and his supporters aggressively occupied the territory that once belonged to the local confraternity and emptied the ranch of seed, livestock, and tools.[2] This religious revival was a welcome

[1] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866, 14 Oct. 1866.
[2] Ibid., carpeta 1867–1868, 15 Oct. 1865.

development only six years later. Most importantly, the revival seemed to be fully within the control of local ecclesiastical personnel and well inside the bounds of orthodoxy.

But why had seemingly anticlerical rebels reversed their position toward the Church? Why did Lozada and his fighters initially besiege parish priests, then support the Conservative cause during the Reform war and the Second Empire? There were two principal reasons. First, the Liberal ideals of a secular society did not resonate in Nayarit. Lozada's troops rejected *particular* priests, not the priesthood in general, and certainly not Catholicism's place in the public sphere.

Second, and most importantly, the Church compromised with the rebels. Beginning just before the Reform War and continuing through the Second Empire, the Guadalajara See granted Lozada and his troops extraordinary liberty in religious matters. The ecclesiastical hierarchy permitted rebels to relocate religious images, select their own ministers, and even erect their own parish. Perhaps the strongest evidence that rebels' support for Conservatism was founded in conviction and not mere pragmatism, is that this extreme laicization of the Nayarit Church resulted in greater orthodoxy, not less.

This chapter examines rebels' support for Conservatism in three sections. First, it describes Conservatism at the national and regional levels in order to provide context for Lozada's rebellion. The national Conservative party was only founded in 1849, but Conservatism as a political philosophy drew on a long tradition of support for ecclesiastical and military privileges and a centralist government. A newly installed Liberal regime directly attacked these privileges in the mid 1850s. National Conservative leaders retook power soon afterward. In order to sap

Liberal strength in the provinces, particularly in Jalisco, these leaders sanctioned Tepic's secession from the state. In doing so, national movements tapped into a regional fight. The Nayarit region held an important commercial route for the state by the nineteenth century, and Liberal and Conservative elites in Guadalajara and Tepic had long battled for control of the territory. Lozada allied with Tepic Conservatives early on in this struggle, which aided his rising power and influence during the subsequent civil wars.

The second section investigates the nature and immediate causes of rural rebellion in 1850s Nayarit. Rebellion along the frontier was at first diffuse. Various communities rebelled relatively independently of each other in order to reclaim lost territory and religious control. They only gradually joined forces with either Lozada or one of his allies, linking their particular cause to a broader-based movement. Furthermore, while Lozada maintained close ties with Tepic elites from the 1850s to the 1870s, the vast majority of his forces came from the "Indian class" of the frontier. He was not initially a prominent military leader, capable of mustering hundreds of soldiers to support his cause. Lozada was instead only one of many "gang leaders" operating along the Nayarit frontier, and, despite his subsequent rise to prominence, his primary base of supporters maintained their humble roots and aims.

The third section will examine the nature of Lozada's uprising in the Second Empire and beyond. On one hand, agrarian reform was important to Lozada and his supporters. The rebel leader effected swift land redistribution in accord with his constituents' demands, at least temporarily calming land conflict in the region. But many of the land reclamations made in the 1850s were undone during the 1860s as both Liberal and Conservative landowners returned to Nayarit after

the Reform war. On the other hand, religious reform proved both more effective and longlasting. Lozada forced a restoration of balance to the moribund spiritual economy of the region. The clergy and their flock reached a new compromise. Angry parishioners in the 1850s had turned to violence to regain some control over their spiritual lives, and in the 1860s ecclesiastical personnel were forced to focus their attention on remote frontier communities. Religious revival was the result.

Despite this religious imperative, scholars of Lozada's movement tend to reject any religious motivation for his rebellion and instead point to agrarian concerns. Disregarding earlier works from the late nineteenth century, which characterized Lozada and his fighters as "fanatical" brigands, many studies from the mid twentieth century onward interpret any defense of religion and the Church as a mere epiphenomenal façade, emblematic of a superficial marriage of convenience between peasant fighters and Tepic elites.[3] In this context, Lozada is presented as a proto-Zapata figure, defending indigenous rights and secular communal lands from local hacienda owners and harmful legislation emanating from the central state.[4] Jean Meyer presents a more nuanced interpretation and allows for some degree of religious motivation on the part of the rebels. But Meyer is concerned primarily with explaining why rural peasants in Nayarit allied with Conservative elites, not what impulses inspired and sustained their rebellion. He ultimately finds that frontier religion had little to do with orthodox Catholicism, and thus dismisses any

[3] Mario Alfonso Aldana Rendón offers the quintessential Marxist interpretation of religion's claim on the rebellion, calling any adherence to the Church the result of clergy's "ideological oppression." Aldana, *La rebelión agraria de Manuel Lozada*, 71. For an example of the late-nineteenth-century literature, see Quevedo y Zubieta, *México: recuerdos de un emigrado*, 83–85.
[4] Silvano Barba González characterized Lozada and the Revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata as "authentic and fierce defenders of Mexican *agricultura*"; Barba González, *La lucha por la tierra*, 109.

peasant-elite alliance based on a religious common ground.[5] Zachary Brittsan, too, largely leaves religion aside in his narrative of the Lozada rebellion.[6] Due partly to an emphasis on Lozada himself, the literature thus far has ignored the spiritual framework constructed over the centuries before the 1850s. Viewed in light of this framework, rebels' alliance with Conservatives is not a superficial ploy, but instead fits within a longstanding tradition of compromise and negotiation.

Conservatism and the Path to Civil War at the National and Regional Levels, 1854–1859

Lozada's early successes owed as much to Conservative maneuvers at the national and regional levels as they did to his own military prowess. For their part, national Conservative leaders intervened in the region in order to cripple a strong opponent. In Jalisco, this meant sanctioning the secession of the state's seventh canton, Tepic. The canton was no longer the economic backwater it had been during the early colonial period. Instead, enough commerce flowed through Tepic in the early republican era to make it one of the state's wealthiest regions, and its loss was a major blow to the Jaliscan economy. Conservative leaders could not have effected such a coup without regional support, of course. This support came from Tepic merchant elites, who gladly accepted the canton's independence from the domineering capital, Guadalajara. By supporting the Conservative national government and repelling Liberal elites from Tepic, these merchants helped create a power vacuum in the region. And, as will be discussed in the second section, Lozada and his rural supporters then quickly stepped in and established their authority.

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[5] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 126, 146–160.
[6] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear." But Brittsan's most recent work demonstrates that rebels' alliance with the Church during the Reform War and Second Empire was born of a mutual understanding; Brittsan, "Not for Lack of Faith," 2, 9–13; and Brittsan, "Brigand Nation," 3–9.

But first, what was Conservatism? For Conservative thinkers, corporatism was integral to national survival. Under a corporatist system, citizenship in the postcolonial state was based on group identification, and ordered in a social hierarchy originating in the colonial period. Those classified as Indians enjoyed communal access to land, and were permitted to exclude outsiders from that privilege even as they were excluded from the political process. The military class enjoyed its own judiciary. Members of the clergy also had their own tribunals, but more importantly, they governed under a special mandate and protection. Catholicism provided the thread to the social fabric, and the corporate Church ministered that thread. Maintaining that social glue required state intervention—maintaining Catholicism as the national religion, for instance. The corporate nature of the Church suffused every aspect of Mexican life with Catholicism, from the sacraments associated with birth, marriage, and death, to social behavior and mortgage lending. By disassembling the corporate Church and attenuating its power, anticlerical Liberal politicians rent the social fabric at precisely the moment it was needed most, when the legitimacy of the Spanish Crown fell away and the nation was under siege from aggressive foreign powers bent on picking apart the young country. The result was decades of coups d'état, war, and despoliation. While Liberals complained Mexico lacked a "national spirit," for Conservatives, the Church provided that soul.[7]

And at mid century, Conservative forces fought to preserve that soul under a strong central state. In the early 1850s, the aging Santa Anna made a brief attempt at dictatorship, but Liberal forces ousted him under the Plan de Ayutla in 1854. As detailed in chapter 2, within three years this radical Liberal government enacted a series of laws and a constitution aimed at dismantling the

[7] As Mariano Otero put it, "[i]n Mexico that which is called national spirit cannot nor has been able to exist, for there is no nation"; Hale, *Mexican Liberalism*, 14.

Church and broadly removing it from the public sphere. Conservative forces rallied and ousted the Ayutla regime in early 1858. A series of Conservative generals, including Miguel Miramón, governed in Mexico City as war raged in the provinces until 1861.

For Miramón, Tepic's independence strengthened the central government. The wealth and power of many western states posed a threat to national stability. Although Jalisco was under a Conservative government in late 1859 and loyal to Miramón, the region had long demonstrated aversion to Mexico City rule. In fact, since its foundation as a kingdom to rival that of Hernán Cortés in the sixteenth century, authorities and elites in New Galicia—and subsequently most of the western states—chafed under central authority. The jurisdictional battles over the Sierra del Nayarit after the 1722 conquest, and the Bolaños mining region after the 1740s bonanza, serve as prime examples of this internecine feud.[8] The rift was only exacerbated in the postcolonial federalist environment. Immediately after Santa Anna declared against Iturbide in late 1822, for instance, both Guadalajara and Zacatecas (among other states) declared their independence. As Guadalajara authorities understood the national situation, "there was no law, treaty, nor compromise that could obligate the provinces to depend on the center." They were only brought back into the national fold in the presence of an occupying army from the central valley.[9] Furthermore, bolstered by mining revenue, Jalisco and Zacatecas continued to fund major

[8] The governments of New Galicia and New Spain had long fought over jurisdiction of this territory, and the bonanza reignited the smoldering dispute. The viceroyalty had claimed the site since the late sixteenth century, and established a beachhead in 1752 when it founded a royal treasury office at Bolaños. Gerhard, *The North Frontier*, 71–72.
[9] Vázquez, "Introducción," 17.

insurrections and participated in the numerous civil wars of the 1830s.[10] Most recently, Jalisco's governor Anastasio Parrodi had formed a military coalition with other Liberal state governments to counter the Conservative coup in 1857. This coalition had only lost Guadalajara to Gen. Miramón in March 1858, less than a year before the acting president granted territory status to Tepic. Although Miramón announced the legal separation of the two regions in 1859 was done out of gratitude for the "services lent to the cause of order by the auxiliary forces of Tepic," this was as much a maneuver to cripple Jalisco, as it was to reward Tepic.[11]

And the loss of Tepic certainly represented a major economic blow to Jalisco. Ever since the naval base of San Blas was transformed into a commercial port, Guadalajara merchants thrived on the traffic through the state's only viable port. When insurgent activity closed the road from Mexico City to Guadalajara during the independence war in 1812, royalist commandant José de la Cruz opened San Blas to commerce. Then, trade exploded at that port the next year when José María Morelos's insurgent forces captured Acapulco, the singular colonial entrepôt for Pacific exchange, and San Blas absorbed Acapulco's Asian trade. This period became one of "unparalleled prosperity for the merchants of Guadalajara." So many imports were arriving at San Blas that the longstanding currency shortage in the intendancy spiked to critical levels.[12] Guadalajara soon attracted foreign traders from elsewhere in Spanish America and Britain, who brought with them commercial links outside the Mexico City orbit. Jalisco's seventh canton continued to supply the majority of goods entering the Guadalajara market, and thus the largest

[10] While Mexico City minted 30 percent of total national silver in the 1820s, 10 percent in the 30s and 12 percent in the 40s, Zacatecas and Jalisco together coined 47 percent, 49 percent, and 34 percent, respectively; Vázquez, "Introducción," 16.
[11] AHEJ, Gobernación, "Tepic se erige en Territorio," 8 Dec. 1859.
[12] Van Young, *Hacienda and Market*, 145–146.

customs tax revenue, through the 1840s.[13] During the U.S.-Mexican War, Tepic made the largest contribution of any canton in the state at 10,000 pesos.[14]

Meanwhile, the canton of Tepic also grew richer in its own right, both legitimately and otherwise. The Tepic-San Blas axis was a "major supplier of the whole of western Mexico," and the commerce flowing through the port was the canton's lifeblood.[15] The total value of imports into San Blas hovered anywhere from 3.5 million to 5 million pesos from 1842 to 1845, while exports totaled an average of 3 million pesos in the same period.[16] While this legitimate trade was voluminous, still more flowed in and out illegally. Anecdotal evidence suggests contraband had long been a fixture at the port. A muleteer was found hauling Chinese products from Tepic (originally from San Blas) to Guadalajara in June 1810: an illegal transport in light of the colonial-era restriction of the Asian trade to Acapulco.[17] This shipment was only a drop in the ocean. An estimated 25 million pesos' worth of goods were unloaded at San Blas from 1811 to 1814, from foreign ships prohibited from disembarking there.[18] In the postcolonial period, the smuggling flow reversed as silver streamed out of the country. In 1854, one British minister reported more than half a million unclaimed pesos floated away on two British naval vessels.[19] But the commercial significance of San Blas did not result in a thriving port city. Oppressive heat and pestilence in the coastal town drove newcomers to nearby Tepic, which boomed in this

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[13] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 377, 382.
[14] Meyer, *Breve historia de Nayarit*, 95.
[15] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 155.
[16] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 379, 383.
[17] Also in this expediente, the customs administrator mentioned one D. Domingo Achurra had brought Chinese goods to San Blas in years past, though no other details are given; AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Alcabalas, 1810, vol. 122, exp. 2, folios 182–249.
[18] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 5. Contraband was so prolific at the port, in fact, that the viceroy ordered it shut down to commerce in 1816, albeit to no effect.
[19] AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Alcabalas, 1810, vol. 122, exp. 2, folios 347–351.

period. In recognition of its growth, the Spanish Crown elevated the town of Tepic to "city" status in 1812, and the growing urban center was permitted an annual commercial fair.[20] By the mid nineteenth century, the town had some 8,000 inhabitants.[21]

Like in Guadalajara, a number of foreign merchants in Tepic capitalized on the spectacular growth of both the formal and informal sectors of the local economy. The two most notable examples were the Spanish Castaños family and the British firm Barron, Forbes & Co, who established commercial houses in the immediate aftermath of independence.[22] The Castaños firm was involved in international commerce, and invested in sugar and textile production.[23] Barron, Forbes & Co. primarily invested in mining and international commerce, exporting silver from the Bajío and importing British and Chinese manufactures for sale in Mexico's urban areas.[24] They also owned a textile factory in Tepic. Their wares became a nationally recognized brand.[25]

Neither Barron, Forbes & Co. nor Castaños restricted themselves to licit trade. Both profited from contraband.[26] Furthermore, both concerns had alliances with local government officials to ease the flow of commerce. By mid century, Barron, Forbes & Co. had established control over numerous elements of the Nayarit supply chain. The firm subsidized the income of customs officials, for instance. Barron, Forbes & Co. made 11 payments to various agents—quasi-

[20] AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Real Audiencia, caja 4326, exp. 009.
[21] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 385.
[22] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 41–42.
[23] López Cotilla, *Noticias geográficas*, 136.
[24] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 423.
[25] Ibid., 429.
[26] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 20.

legitimate bribes called *fianzas*—ranging from 500–1,000 pesos from 1840 to 1850.[27] The firm also maintained reliable transport for their goods through alliances with local muleteering families, such as the Ceseña, Matamoros, and García clans.[28] Moreover, their political enemies alleged Barron, Forbes & Co. had established ties to Lozada in order to ensure safe conduct through the bandit-ridden roads of the Nayarit countryside.[29]

The competing firms of Barron, Forbes & Co. and the Castaños family lined up on opposite sides of the political divide. For their part, the Castaños benefited from their ties to the Guadalajara Liberal elite. Twenty-one-year-old Juan José inherited his father's enterprise in 1846 despite legally being too young, for instance, with the recommendation of the Jaliscan Liberal congressman Mariano Otero.[30] Meanwhile, Barron, Forbes & Co. established alliances with local Conservatives, such as the Rivas family in Tepic. To a large degree, these alliances were motivated by financial concerns. The Rivas clan had long controlled customs administration in the canton and held high political and military office in Tepic.[31] And some scholars argue that Conservatism's tendency toward centralism suited well Barron, Forbes & Co.'s autonomy and illicit trade. Mayo points out that, even though both the federalist and centralist systems proved

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[27] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 76.
[28] AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia, vol. 557, exp. 8, folio 80; and Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 261.
[29] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 221.
[30] AGN: México Independiente, Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia, vol. 284, exp. 36.
[31] Manuel Rivas held the post of customs administrator in San Blas beginning in 1829, and his son Carlos did the same, at least for a time, before serving as Lozada's second in command. Meanwhile, another Manuel Rivas (possibly the brother of Carlos, or at least a relative) alternately served as an alcalde and prefect of Tepic with Lozada's consent throughout the 1850s and 60s. See Contreras, "La familia Rivas," 158; Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 146; and AGN, México Independiente: Gobernación y Relaciones Exteriores, Segundo Imperio, caja 54, exp. 32, folio 8.

impotent to effectively regulate trade, a centralist system removed what little state oversight there was and gave merchants on the distant coast a freer hand.[32]

Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest both the Castaños family and the partners of Barron, Forbes & Co. had some political conviction. Joaquin Castaños (acting on behalf of his mother, Gabriela Lazcano de Castaños) was the first to implement the Ley Lerdo to obtain confraternity property in Tepic. While some Conservative members of Tepic's elite would later obtain ecclesiastical property in the same manner (as discussed in chapter 2), being the first required a certain amount of anticlerical zeal. The Castaños case set a legal precedent for the region: the Tepic priest refused to present himself before the court to represent the Church's interest in that case, and all subsequent confraternity adjudications in Tepic cited the Castaños alienation as sufficient reason to proceed without the presence of a Church representative.[33] Barron and Forbes, meanwhile, demonstrated a private religious passion. A staunch devotee of the Virgin, Eustaquio Barrón sought and received papal approval for special privileges for her altar in Tepic in 1848.[34] William Forbes also shared Barrón's affinity for Catholic display. A Santa María del Oro priest found himself in a difficult position in 1850 when he was forced to explain to Forbes why the funeral of a local landowner—for which Forbes was in charge of the accounts—lacked enough pomp for the occasion.[35]

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[32] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 19.
[33] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 3, folios 876–887.
[34] Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 35.
[35] AHEN, Protocolos, Jesús Vejar, 1854, folios 121–263; and AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, exp. 22, carpeta 22 Nov. 1846, 20 Nov. 1850.

The rivalry between the two commercial houses, in combination with their political loyalties, created an explosive scenario as the Liberal-Conservative conflict heated up at mid century. Coinciding with the radicalization of cofrades along the Nayarit frontier, what began as a business spat in the early 1850s rapidly turned to violence by 1855. After decades of competition with Barron, Forbes & Co., the Castaños operations went bankrupt in 1852 and much of the family relocated to Guadalajara. In Jalisco's capital they had the ear of the press and carried on a newspaper war with their former rival. Meanwhile, their political allies came to power in Guadalajara with the victory of the Liberal Plan de Ayutla, and within months the new governor—Santos Degollado—replaced the customs officials at San Blas. José María Castaños y Lazcano (brother of Juan José mentioned above) was one of Degollado's handpicked officials, along with Fermín Gómez Farías, the son of the radical Liberal politician.[36] In December 1855, a Tepic militia unit called the Batallón de Libres de Jalisco seconded the Plan de Guanajuato against Pres. Juan Álvarez, allegedly with funding from Barron, Forbes & Co.[37] Degollado personally led a military force to Tepic to quell the insurrection, and Eustaquio Barron and William Forbes fled before the suppression.[38]

A subsequent international confrontation further polarized the two sides. Taking advantage of Barron and Forbes's departure, Degollado officially exiled the pair from the country, accusing

[36] Fermín's father, Valentín Gómez Farías, was the acting president responsible for attempting to alienate Church property in 1833, for example, and for levying a 15-million-peso loan against Church property in 1847.
[37] As a rising commercial town, Tepic was the site of a number of pronunciamientos during the nineteenth century. In 1838, for instance, a Tepic military unit led a federalist revolt against Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga; AGN, México Independiente: Archivo de Guerra, vol. 1421, leg. 589.
[38] For an account of the Barron, Forbes & Co. affair, see Mayo, *Commerce and Contraband*, 395–405; Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 241–244; and Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 430–436.

them of subversive acts beyond funding the Batallón de Libres, such as employing Lozada's gang and smuggling 40 mule-loads of silver out of San Blas during the confusion caused by the rebellion.[39] He ordered their goods confiscated, and the firm's office was sacked and razed in July 1856. Moreover, the British consul in San Blas was incarcerated. Barron and Forbes, the British and U.S. consuls in Tepic at the time, soon involved the British government in the affair.

Although this maneuver would restore the partners to their former posts in Tepic, peace did not come. Not wanting to risk an expensive conflict with England, Pres. Comonfort stepped in and permitted Barron and Forbes to return, and granted them an indemnity of 150,000 pesos in November of that year. Barron wrote to the British chargé that he had been welcomed back into Tepic with open arms, but this was an exaggeration. The fear and tension is almost palpable in the reports of a Jaliscan judge who had been commissioned to investigate the charge of contraband in late July 1856. His acquaintances in Guadalajara warned him that Tepic was divided into two camps engaged in a "fight to the death," and he subsequently found numerous excuses not to travel north until early December of that year, after the conflict with England had been resolved. Once he arrived, the jefe político of Tepic—Luis Rivas—warned the judge not to delve too deeply in his investigation lest he stir another rebellion. The judge took Rivas's advice. Indeed, he must have feared that violence would spread beyond Tepic into the surrounding countryside. In his journey from Guadalajara to Tepic, the judge questioned field workers he encountered along the way and found that the fight between Liberals and Conservatives had roused fierce sentiment as far distant as the cantonal border 30 leagues away. Some

[39] AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia, vol. 557, exp. 8, folio 80.

> "immeasurably praise the firm of Barron and Forbes as the most protective of the canton and the only one that moves the currency that circulates across its entire extension. The others detest the terrible predominance of a foreign firm that encompasses and dominates all, wishing to exercise a tremendous power [at every level,] from internal family affairs to national politics."[40]

In sum, although Manuel Lozada later proved to be the most salient figure of the Reform period in Nayarit, other actors and interests—such as Tepic businessmen and a Conservative central government—aligned in the same period to clear the way for an enduring rebel state balanced between urban and rural interests. At first, an influential sector of Tepic merchants, bolstered by the political and logistical personnel it retained or paid off, actively resisted interference from the Jaliscan government in local commercial affairs. This resistance extended into the political sphere as the firm Barron, Forbes & Co. allied with Tepic Conservatives against local Liberals and Guadalajara political elites. Moreover, this conflict was not merely an urban affair, but stretched along the length of the major commercial routes in the region and incorporated numerous actors from arrieros to hired security. Second, for a Conservative government intent on restoring stability and order across the country, weakening perennial challengers was a necessary move. Jalisco's seventh canton offered a ripe target. Jalisco had long proven a source of national instability, alternately supporting centralist and federalist, Conservative and radical Liberal regimes since independence. Moreover, Nayarit's mountainous terrain made the region remote and easily defensible, and its commercial wealth made it relatively self-sufficient. Most importantly, the recent battle between Gov. Degollado and Barron, Forbes & Co. left Conservatives in a strong position in the region. National and regional political maneuvers

[40] Ibid., folios 78–81.

brought Tepic to semi-official statehood in the mid nineteenth century. As discussed below, Lozada's movement exploited this situation to give a new religious and political shape to that state.

The Causes and Nature of Rebellion along the Nayarit Frontier, 1854–1860

While Liberal and Conservative elites in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Tepic battled over centralism and commercial routes, frontereños rebelled against the unwanted alienation of religious property. As discussed in chapter 3, cofrades had sought to reclaim sodality property via legitimate channels since the 1840s. It was only when these attempts failed that parishioners turned to violence to restore lost land. Furthermore, rebels formed an ethnically coherent group. They primarily came from the small, landed communities of the Nayarit frontier. Larger, more diverse communities in that region also supplied fighters, but rebels from those areas almost universally came from the "Indian" subclass. Lozada was no exception to this pattern. A "gang leader" from the small town of San Luis, he did not boast family ties to Tepic elites, nor did he inherit political power from his father. Lozada was initially only one of many strongmen in the region. But he soon proved to be an adept mediator between state and Church leaders and his supporters. Moreover, ecclesiastical authorities in Guadalajara and Nayarit were willing to compromise on local religious matters in the face of war. By the end of the Reform, Lozada was well on his way to regional prominence.

Rebels were at first frustrated in their attempts to stop the systematic alienation of religious property in their communities. All peaceful means of reclaiming this disputed territory, whether

by civil or religious ruling bodies, had been exhausted by mid century. In terms of confraternity property, litigants had hit a wall by the 1850s. As discussed in chapter 3, in the early nineteenth century priests merely wrested control from cofrades and left sodality property intact, but by mid century frontereños learned that not even this property was sacred to the clergy. In desperation, cofrade groups attempted various methods to reclaim the land and livestock. They pursued reclamation through the courts or direct appeals to the governor, *jefe político* of Tepic, or the Guadalajara See. But a multi-layered, labyrinthine bureaucracy frustrated their efforts. Every sympathetic public official could be outmatched by another who sided with the clergy. We have already discussed many of these crises in the larger frontier communities, such as those in Jala and Santa María del Oro.

This same process was repeated in smaller communities, as well. A late-1840s dispute between Santa María del Oro priest Victorino Núñez and the cofrades of Tequepexpan offers one example. In early 1848, cofrades appropriated and sold sodality livestock to pay for land litigation against a local hacienda, but did so without license from the Guadalajara See. An infuriated Núñez subsequently filed suit against the brotherhood in the nearby judicial seat of Ahuacatlán. He won the case, but angered the cofrades. They were, after all, merely attempting to enlarge confraternity territory in their own litigation against the hacienda. Thus, when Núñez later found the Tequepexpan mayordomo also owed money from collecting burial obventions, the cofrades conspired against their priest. Rather than pay back the mounting debt, the cofrades attempted to circumvent the priest and legally maintain sodality property. The community claimed the mayordomo owed significantly more than simply the obventions and appropriated cattle that Núñez claimed. In addition, they stated the confraternity administrator owed them 10

silver picture frames, a monstrance, and two candelabra, and so requested an embargo of his goods. The plan, Núñez alleged in a report to the See, was ultimately to have the mayordomo declared insolvent and thus avoid any payment whatsoever.

A few months later, Núñez explained to the Miter that the solution was necessarily complex. He would first seek a disembargo of the mayordomo's property in Ahuacatlán—where he won the previous case against the sodality—and then pursue the debt with Jala authorities. It was necessary to go through Jala because, in Tequepexpan, "magistrates and Indians are the same thing."[41] Núñez's gambit was ultimately successful, but this was only a temporary victory. As mentioned in chapter 3, Núñez fled his parish after Tequepexpan became a rebel staging ground in mid 1855.[42]

Beyond ecclesiastical property, many communities also had disputes with local hacendados over apparently secular communal land. Ayuntamientos from the canton of Tepic in 1849 reported disputes between Indians and hacendados in San Luis, Santa María del Oro, Xalisco, San Andrés, Ahuacatlán, Ixtlán, and Acaponeta, among other communities.[43] Many of these disputes soon became violent. Recognizing both this increased violence in rural areas and the state government's inability to intervene, the Jalisco legislature issued a decree in 1856 that sanctioned the fighting. Under the decree, hacendados and Indian groups could legally settle

[41] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 21, 15 Oct. 1841; and ibid., exp. 22, 22 Nov. 1846, 3 March 1848; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1826, I, 1 Jan. 1849; ibid., 12 April 1849. The quote is taken from ibid., 2 Oct. 1849.
[42] Ibid., carpeta 1849–1857, 14 May 1855.
[43] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 83.

their disputes with armed force.[44] But the various gangs operating in Nayarit did not need a legal pretext to assault haciendas. San Luis residents had been in legal battle with the various owners of the Hacienda de Mojarras since at least 1826, and Lozada's gang attacked the hacienda in its first public skirmish, in 1854.[45]

But it must be noted that, in at least some of these land disputes, the territory in question was dedicated to religious ends. In the case of Xalisco, for example, a longstanding dispute between Indian groups and the Hacienda de Costilla concerned property that was once used by the confraternity, even if it was never titled as such. As discussed in chapter 2, the owner of the estate sought to close off his lands to the Xalisco confraternity herds at the turn of the century. When a new owner acquired the property some years later, the dispute was renewed. The Xalisco ayuntamiento complained in May 1830 that Bruno Arantón took over a community plot—likely through either disamortization decree 151 or 288—when he learned it had no title to the property.[46] Although the plot under question was ayuntamiento land and there is no explicit mention of any religious purpose, the Xalisco priest at this time ordered the confraternity to contribute 10 pesos to an attorney (a cofrade) "for the litigation over the lands of this Pueblo."[47] In 1843 yet another Costilla owner in her testament claimed the Indians of Xalisco were

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[44] The measure can be found in *Colección de los decretos*, vol. XIV, 15–16. One hacendado's complaint can be found in Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 158.
[45] In May 1839, "the Indians of San Luis" conferred power of attorney to D. Miguel Apodaca in their then 13-year dispute with D. Juan Antonio Andrade, owner of the Hacienda de Mojarras; AHEN, Jesús Vejar, 1838, folios 64–69. This legal dispute continued in 1850, when some 60 Indians of San Luis elected *vocales* to represent them in the Mojarras case; AHEN, Jesús Vejar, 1850, folios 83–85. See also Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 37. NB: The day after the assault on Mojarras, Lozada laid siege to Santa María del Oro in support of the cofrades' fight to reclaim sodality property, as discussed in chapter 3.
[46] AIPEJ, Ramo Tierras y Aguas, Segunda Colección, Legajo 23, vol. 73, exp. 24.
[47] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 33, 1830–1832.

disputing the "Rancho de la Cofradía" on her property.[48] Although it is unclear precisely when the decades-long dispute ended, the Indians—without any mention of the clergy—lost their case for the territory sometime between 1849 and 1857.[49] Lozada later established a temporary headquarters at Cofradía ranch, likely with the help of local supporters.[50] While the conflict over religious territory was primarily fought in the ecclesiastical arena—between priests and parishioners—the laity also fought for land that was unofficially dedicated to religious ends, and did so independently of the clergy.

As it was this struggle for religious communal land that pushed frontereños to violence, the rebellion centered on small, ethnically coherent landed communities. And in the political environment of mid-nineteenth-century Jalisco, outside observers labeled those communities "Indian" towns. In Tequepexpan, as mentioned above, the parish priest claimed the "Indians" were calling for his death.[51] Political authorities, too, confirmed this ethno-geography of rebellion. In 1858, the Jalisco governor assembled a commission to measure the lands under dispute by the "indigenous" of the canton of Tepic. San Luis, Pochotitán, Guaynamota, and San Andrés were specifically targeted in order to pacify the region.[52]

Meanwhile, the larger, socially stratified head towns of Jala, Ahuacatlán, Santa María del Oro, and Xalisco demonstrated serious internal division, and these towns drifted in and out of the rebellion's orbit as Lozada's supporters there jockeyed for control. Immediately following

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[48] AHEN, Jesús Vejar, 1843, folio 123.
[49] AHEN, Vicente González, 1857, folios 140–142.
[50] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 23 March 1863.
[51] Ibid., 14 May 1855.
[52] AHEJ, Gobernación, Indios, caja 2, G-9-858, 10190.

Lozada's siege of Santa María del Oro in 1854, for example, the parish priest reported all the vecinos had fled. Only the *indios* who had allied with Lozada remained—including the likely Indian minister, assistant to the priest.[53] Lozada's relationship with Jala was equally mixed. On one hand, his forces were a scourge on the populace. Lozada assaulted the town in 1855 and again in 1861, the second time leaving two men and a woman dead and razing all but the Church and a portion of the parsonage.[54] On the other hand, he was a friend to the "Indian" sector. In 1863, Lozada sent a land commission to Jala, and the "impoverished indigenous" there received a disbursement of the *fondo municipal* they had requested.[55] Moreover, in 1865 he issued threats to the "enemies of the Supreme [Imperial] Government" in Jala, claiming their land would be redistributed to the indigenous residents of the town.[56] Perhaps an imperial official best described the rural nature of Lozada's forces when he wrote to the strongman in 1866, "I know very well that your forces are neither regulars nor do you wish that they were." Instead, "they are comprised of men very dedicated to field labor or to other tasks. . . . at [your] voice they leave the hoe to take up the firearm."[57]

For his part, Manuel Lozada had a shrewd ability to balance rural religious and agrarian concerns with Tepic Conservatives' demands that enabled him to rise to prominence during the Reform War. Little is known of his early life. He was born Manuel García González on September 28, 1828, in San Luis, and took his maternal uncle's last name while he was young, after his father

[53] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 29 Sept. 1857.
[54] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 13, 25 Feb. 1855, 5 June 1855; and AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, 27 Sept. 1861.
[55] AHEN, Juicios civiles, Ahuacatlán, caja 1, leg. 1, no. 92, folios 13–14.
[56] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 115.
[57] AHSEDENA, Ramo Cancelados, Manuel Lozada, 16 October 1866.

died.[58] As a youth, he reputedly worked as a cowboy on the nearby Hacienda de Mojarras.[59] The details of his forced departure from Mojarras vary. In one account, he robbed a fellow laborer and fled to the hills to escape punishment. In another, Lozada had a forbidden love affair with the hacienda mayordomo's daughter, and committed *rapto*, or a form of courtship-kidnapping.[60] But whatever his origins, by the early 1850s Lozada was one of many independent "gang leaders" who operated along the Nayarit frontier and throughout the Sierra in the mid 1850s. Regional military commanders embarked on various campaigns against these groups in 1854, and were relatively successful. Brittsan has found reports detailing the arrest, death, or enlistment of nearly a dozen such leaders in 1854–1855 alone. Lozada himself was allegedly defeated and wounded in one of these campaigns.[61] But his survival and retreat into the Sierra del Nayarit, coupled with growing national instability, allowed him the opportunity to expand his influence.

Between 1855 and 1860, Lozada allied with merchants and Conservative military leaders in Tepic and gained prestige and matériel in exchange. He allegedly participated in the 1855 Conservative rebellion in Tepic, as noted above. Their Liberal opponents in that episode accused Barron, Forbes & Co. of negotiating an arrangement with the "bandidos de Álica"—Lozada's group—whereby the gang would escort the merchants to and from the city in exchange for ammunition.[62] Whether or not this accusation is true, Lozada became the key Conservative ally along the inhospitable frontier when that party took power in early 1858. Conservative authorities in Tepic appointed Lozada to pacify the still-rebellious Sierra in April of that year, for

[58] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 78; and Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 49.
[59] Aldana Rendón, "Manuel Lozada y la rebelión indígena de Nayarit," 24.
[60] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 28. For further analysis of the practice of rapto, see Sloan, "Disobedient Daughters."
[61] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 31–33.
[62] Ibid. 34–36.

example. The subprefect of Santiago recommended the ex-gang leader be appointed to put down Indians in the towns of Jesús María and Guaynamota.[63] And Carlos Rivas, scion of an elite Tepic family and in 1858 acting as legal representative for the "Indians of Tepic," tapped Lozada to issue governmental pardons in those towns.[64] Within the year, Lozada joined Rivas and other Conservative officers in campaigns in and around the canton of Tepic. He was subsequently given the rank of lieutenant colonel in the auxiliary forces of the newly created territory of Nayarit in 1859.[65]

Meanwhile, Lozada and his supporters attempted land reclamations and reform throughout the rebellion. Many of these maneuvers were successful—at least until the end of the Reform war. And much of this was ex-confraternity land or other territory dedicated to religious ends, such as the Gabriel López and Laguna ranches in Santa María del Oro, and Cofradía in Xalisco.[66] In Jala, too, Lozada's supporters encamped in Acuitapilco, a nearby ranch that was home to the town's confraternity land.[67] Local lozadistas had been angered when the Jala priest sold off Acuitapilco ranch in 1855, and an alliance with Lozada offered these fighters an opportunity to redress a fresh local grievance.

Other territory belonged to landowners who fled the fighting. The owner of the Hacienda de Tetitlán, for example, alleged that Tequepexpan residents first occupied his estate, then turned a

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[63] AHEJ, Gobernación, Indios, caja 2, G-9-858, 10184.
[64] Ibid., 10189. Carlos Rivas was also a landowner in his own right. A will written in 1870 listed the haciendas of San Cayetano and Trigomil—in the jurisdictions of Tepic and Xalisco, respectively—in his possession; AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1870, folios 6–8.
[65] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 44.
[66] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 17, 20 June 1856; and AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 23 March 1863.
[67] Ibid., Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868, 15 Oct. 1865.

portion of it over to lozadistas during the Reform.[68] Some landowners proved more canny. As he fled before Lozada's forces, Ahuacatlán resident Encarnación Jiménez handed over his property to the local confraternity "as in a shipwreck when goods are thrown into the sea."[69]

Morover, it must be noted that lozadistas pursued at least some of these land appropriations heedless of their Tepic allies' interests. The fight between the Hacienda de Mojarras and the town of San Luis provides an example of this complicated dialectic. At first, Lozada's 1854 raid of the property provided an opportunity for his alleged allies—the merchant house Barron, Forbes & Co.—to diversify into real estate.[70] One year after the raid, the Tepic firm purchased the hacienda at a cut rate. The previous owners had purchased it for 80,000 pesos in 1852, but three years later let it go for 30,000 pesos less due to the hassles of the ongoing legal battles with San Luis and the frequent raids, which had scared off the workers.[71] At first glance, this might appear to demonstrate sophisticated collusion between San Luis peasants and Barron, Forbes & Co. But the new owners did not satisfy the peasants' demands, and Lozada showed up at the hacienda again in 1857 with a force of 300 men and demanded new boundaries between the estate and the town. Notably, the gang did not rob the hacienda nor raze any of its buildings; Lozada merely warned the estate administrator that he would soon return to draw new boundaries. Nevertheless, Lozada's men repulsed a garrison sent to intercept them, killing one

[68] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 166.
[69] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Ahuacatlán, caja 1, "Consulta sobre la ley de desamortización de las fincas eccas. que fueron devueltas," 21 March 1865.
[70] The Tepic concern invested in and owned multiple haciendas from Morelos to Nayarit; Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 429–430.
[71] AHEN, Jesús Vejar, 1854, folios 121–263; and ibid., 1855, vol. 2, folios 101–106.

and injuring many. Barron, Forbes & Co. later claimed Lozada's men occupied Mojarras territory from 1860 to 1873.[72]

But most importantly, Church began to compromise with Lozada. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the ecclesiastical hierarchy initiated this compromise. Bishop Espinosa y Dávalos first halted his private Church-land sales with a moratorium in late 1856, and then sanctioned cofrades' hostile takeover of sodality property in early 1857. Over the course of the Reform War, the lower clergy in Nayarit, too, reconciled themselves with Lozada. An 1859 petition to the Guadalajara See on behalf of a group of Santa María del Oro parishioners reveals this shift. In one of his extended absences from the parish seat, Fr. Dámaso Martínez was temporarily replaced by a substitute minister. But the new cleric was not content with a temporary post. According to the anonymous petitioners, the substitute minister conspired to usurp the parish by convening juntas of parishioners and offering to reduce their obventions if they signed a denunciation of Martínez. The junta did so, but once the substitute took charge of the parish in late August, he removed the sacristan and the organist, and took the keys to the church along with the parish funds. The petitioners sought Martínez's return. They lauded his charity, using 700 pesos of his own funds to repair the church. Most importantly, Martínez kept the peace during a time of war. He personally traveled to Tepic and San Luis in order to settle disputes, even at night and without an escort. It is suggestive that the petitioners mentioned only Tepic and San Luis. While Tepic had long been the most important city in the canton, San Luis had clearly risen to become an important hub on the frontier. Moreover, Dámaso Martínez was one of Lozada's first targets in 1854, the priest cornered in the Santa María del Oro church while the gang of the Sierra de Álica

[72] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 158–159, 179–180.

laid siege to the town at the cofrades' request. Fr. Martínez's reversal of fortune from wanted man to welcome negotiator likely demonstrated more frontereños' softening attitude toward the clergy than it did any change on Martínez's part. If Lozada and his gang had ever been merciless outlaws, as their critics alleged, it was clear by 1859 that they had responded to a higher calling. Lozada instead sought to establish himself as the frontier authority, and San Luis, by extension, as the seat of that authority.

Overall, Lozada's movement was a confederation of multiple small frontier communities, and select social groups in larger, more stratified communities, in its formative years from 1854 to 1860. Frontier religion and the lost access to communal land united this confederation. This does not imply that the rebellion was a movement to restore the colonial-era compromise between soldados fronterizos and religious and civil authorities. Nor does it imply, as some have suggested, that Nayarit was simply never fully conquered, never fully integrated into colonial—and later Mexican—society.[73] On the contrary, it was these communities' full participation in republican processes that both sparked the rebellion and gave it shape. The movement was Conservative in the sense that it supported the privileged place Catholicism held in Mexican society, and adopted the "Indian" identity that outside observers had labeled it, as discussed in the next section. For his part, Lozada did not come from an elite family, nor did he enjoy any hereditary cacicazgo. He was instead one of those warlords of modest means who violently seized power amid the postcolonial era's "militarization of politics."[74] Essentially, Lozada's success was attributable to the number of distinct, yet overlapping niches he filled. He was the

[73] Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada*, 43.
[74] Buve, "Political Patronage," 21.

"father of the people" to his followers, a convenient shield for Tepic merchants, and an integral ally for the Conservative military and the Church.[75]

Land Reform, Religious Revival, and Frontier Politics, 1861–1873

Frontereños took advantage of the political opening in Nayarit and gradually developed their own state apart from Tepic urbanites. As their prime advocate, Manuel Lozada responded to frontereño concerns and mediated between them and religious and civil authorities in order to gain concessions for the region. As discussed above, Lozada and his supporters first reclaimed lost or disputed territory as large landowners fled Nayarit in the chaos of the Reform War. But this land grab proved short-lived. Many Liberal elites in Tepic fulfilled the ecclesiastical nationalization decree in 1861 and usurped any remaining Church property. Later, during the peace of the Second Empire many absent owners returned to the area and reclaimed their rightful property.

In the end, Lozada's intervention in religious affairs proved more durable. In the final years of the Reform War and continuing into the Second Empire, he shifted the religious loci of the frontier from the longstanding parish seats to the backcountry and elevated his hometown-headquarters of San Luis as a new, *de facto* parish seat. Once-alienated parishioners returned to the Church, and a new generation of clergy saw a religious revival through the 1860s.

[75] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 295.

Meanwhile, Lozada continued to earn rewards from civil authorities intent on keeping him within Conservative ranks, and later within the Restored Republic. He parlayed these concessions into greater control over Nayarit politics. He briefly occupied Tepic and instituted martial law, and transformed countryside politics into a sort of corporate democracy complete with annual *juntas de pueblos* and land-redistribution commissions. In all of this, Lozada maintained a racial identity to the movement, based on frontereños' conception of an Indian political class. In sum, despite the varied groups and interests that brought Jalisco's seventh canton to political independence in 1859, frontereños grasped the opportunity to reconstruct religious and civil governance in their own fashion for the next two decades.

At the national level, Liberals and Conservatives continued to battle for power as the civil war entered a new phase. Liberal forces defeated Conservatives in early 1861, and Benito Juárez assumed the presidency in Mexico City. The Liberal 1857 constitution again took effect along with the decrees Juárez enacted in Veracruz during the Reform war, such as his 1859 measure that nationalized Church property. Meanwhile, the three-year civil war had devastated the Mexican economy, and Juárez canceled payment on all foreign debt. This policy inadvertently pushed Mexico into five more years of war. Spain, England, and France—Mexico's foreign creditors—assembled a fleet of ships to block Veracruz harbor, and the expeditionary force seized customs revenue late in 1861 as a punitive measure. But France, under Napoleon III, had larger designs. After a devastating defeat in mid 1862, French troops successfully invaded the Mexican mainland the next year in 1863 and, in collaboration with defeated Conservatives and some moderate Liberals, established the Second Mexican Empire. The Austrian archduke

Maximilian assumed the throne in 1864 and ruled from Mexico City while French and Conservative troops pursued Liberal (now Constitutionalist) forces across the provinces.

These political changes in turn destabilized land tenure in Nayarit. The first round of challenges came in early 1861, immediately after Liberals regained power in Mexico City and reinstated the ecclesiastical nationalization decree. That decree, issued on July 12, 1859, permitted the government to assume Church credit; all remaining liens and mortgages that the Church held on property, and all pending land sales would now be paid out to the state. Like the Lerdo Law, the 1859 decree favored those who already held the property but also relied on interested parties to denounce any land that remained unclaimed or was being held by absentee owners—likely people who had fled the area during the Reform war and had yet to return to Tepic.[76] A number of Liberal elites and foreign businessmen in Tepic took advantage of this measure. According to the 56 extant adjudications in Tepic's jurisdiction, 124,038 pesos in Church credit were handed over to the state between February and July 1861.[77] Most of the adjudicated properties were urban, or pertained to the wealthy Tepic confraternities.

Nevertheless, a few important properties along the frontier fell under this decree, as well. In one of the earliest adjudications in Tepic, for instance, the German-born director of the "Tepiqueña" firm, Eduardo Weber, sought the "uncultivated" land known as Puerta de Escobar. The area must not have been completely uncultivated. Lozada included a community by this name in his rural

[76] Away from Tepic in late April 1861, for instance, the Hernández family lost their rights to a rural property they had earlier disamortized when one Da. María Barragán denounced it under the nationalization decree and usurped the land. But after the family returned in June of that year, they filed suit to reclaim their property; AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1861 (bound together with 1860), folios 71–74.
[77] Ibid., beginning on folio 75 and continuing intermittently to 211.

parish in 1863. Another German businessman, Germán Versmann, partnered with a Daniel María Anguiano to usurp eight rural properties that had either not been claimed or belonged to absentee owners.[78] A Xalisco confraternity plot—along with "six and a half" teams of cattle—had not been disamortized under the Lerdo Law and Versmann consequently claimed it.[79] In other cases, interested parties had already denounced land under the Lerdo Law and were merely confirming their ownership under the new law. This was the case for confraternity property worth 2,000 pesos in Zapotán.[80] Moreover, Spanish businessman Juan Antonio Aguirre confirmed his earlier purchase of land within Atonalisco's jurisdiction, another community that later fell within Lozada's parish.[81]

During the Second Empire, Maximilian attempted to restore normalcy to the country and opened the imperial courts to land disputes from all parties. Many of Lozada's land reclamations came under attack amid this political change. Ixtlán resident Nicolás Ramírez, the father of a Liberal general and himself an active Liberal fighter during the Reform war, sued for the return of his property in Jala after Lozada ordered it redistributed among the Indian population in 1863. Despite Lozada's argument that Ramírez was an enemy of the state, imperial authorities ordered his land restored to him first in 1864, and again in 1865 after Guadalajara military officials refused to intervene on Ramírez's behalf.[82] It must be noted that these challenges—both during Juárez's interregnum and the Second Empire—were largely ineffective. As long as Lozada

[78] Ibid., folios 41–44, 49–53, 53–57, 82–87, 99–102, 105–108, 146–154, 159–161. In addition, Daniel María Anguiano usurped two additional plots, but these were urban structures and Versmann's name did not appear in the adjudication record; ibid., folios 84–86, 172–175.
[79] Ibid., folios 99–102.
[80] Ibid., folios 202–204.
[81] Ibid., folios 86–89, 92–95.
[82] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 167–170.

commanded the frontier, outside authorities could not enforce land claims against him or his followers.

Nevertheless, Lozada struggled to maintain political legitimacy in the region, and he took seriously his growing administrative duties in the region. For example, Lozada's key ally among the Tepic elite, Carlos Rivas, took pains to work with imperial authorities on land reform, and vehemently protested their failure. Rivas met with these officials in July 1865, and together they developed guidelines for a land commission to travel to the Nayarit countryside and settle ongoing disputes between pueblos and nearby landowners. But the emperor's subsequent decree enacting this commission fell short of Rivas's hopes. The decree unfairly permitted hacendados to sit on the councils that would determine territorial boundaries, for instance. The measure, he explained, returned Indians to that debased "pupilage" to which they were subject in the colonial order. Government bureaucrats, in turn, merely claimed that all disputes would be handled quickly but left the law unchanged.[83]

In the face of these challenges from disenfranchised landowners and the imperial state, Lozada instituted his own land-distribution commissions to act as arbiters in the countryside. In Jala, Andrés Rosales headed one such *junta* to settle a dispute over municipal land in 1866.[84] There, "the needy Indians" sought and received a parcel of the public property. In addition, the junta removed the municipal mayordomo and installed a new administrator. Finally, the junta recommended that an "onerous" municipal tax be lifted. As the Indians explained, they had

[83] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 170–171; and Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 118–120.
[84] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1870, folios 240–241; and AHEN, Juicios civiles, Ahuacatlán, caja 1, leg. 1, no. 92.

already paid much of it and furthermore lent "services … as sons of the pueblo."[85] These commissions continued to operated after the fall of the Empire. Rivas intervened in land disputes on behalf of Indian groups in multiple towns across the frontier, such as Atonalisco, Jala, Jomulco, Ahuacatlán, and Ixtlán.[86] In 1869, for instance, the "Indians" of San Andrés were involved in a dispute over former confraternity territory with Juan Antonio Aguirre, the owner of a local hacienda.[87] San Andrés residents in this case granted Rivas power of attorney in the broad hope he would "reclaim, reassemble, and measure all or part of the lands that correspond to the pueblo."[88] Lozada subordinates Domingo Nava and Praxedis Núñez, too, occasionally served as general representatives in frontier communities.[89]

But while civil governments came and went, throwing land tenure in constant flux, ecclesiastical administration in Guadalajara remained constant. The compromise between Church authorities and Lozada begun during the Reform war only strengthened and expanded during the Second Empire. With the renewal of civil war in 1862 Lozada sought to recenter the Nayarit ecclesiastical map on San Luis. In a span of two years he set his town as the seat of the newest frontier parish and himself as an ecclesiastical judge. Notably, these innovations came at the expense—albeit minimal—of the existing ecclesiastical structure. The fact that Lozada successfully maintained this new arrangement was a testament to the popularity of his reforms and the Church hierarchy's weakness in this domain. His first target was Santiago, a town north of Tepic that had long supported the Liberal cause. In 1859, for example, parish priest Norberto

[85] Ibid., folios 13, 14.
[86] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 134.
[87] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1870, folios 161–163.
[88] Ibid., 1869, folios 39–41.
[89] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 131; and AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1870, folios 240–241.

Guerra brought 200 men from Santiago to Tepic to support the occupying Liberal forces. Guerra fled the town when he learned Lozada's forces had taken the plaza, and the priest was later denounced before the Guadalajara See and arrested for his actions.[90] The town again supported the Liberal cause in 1862, although this time with graver consequences. In June 1862, Liberal general Ramón Corona occupied Santiago and executed the visiting Tepic cleric Félix Ojeda on suspicion of collaborating with Lozada.[91] Eight months later in January 1863, Lozada sacked the town and in the process removed Santiago's image of Our Lord of the Ascension and carried it back to San Luis. Once there, the image remained in the rebel headquarters until Lozada's execution in 1873.[92] Many contemporary writers interpreted this move as evidence of rebels' "fanaticism," and an account of the event was sensationalized in 1889.[93] But "fanaticism" implies irrational behavior. On the contrary, this *furta sacra* served two very practical purposes. First, Lozada's forces punished an enemy and a Liberal-leaning town through this theft, a retribution made especially poignant after Santiago's residents refused to intervene to save a priest's life.

Second, stealing the Christ image and installing it in San Luis formed part of a broader scheme to construct a new religious center in Lozada's headquarters. An oratory in Lozada's home soon housed the displaced Señor de Santiago and, with Lozada's funding, work had already begun to

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[90] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 160.
[91] While I have not been able to establish any connection between Ojeda and Lozada, a well-to-do Ojeda family lived in Jala at this time; moreover, one Fernanda Ojeda in 1866 joined the newly created, all-female Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in that town; AHAG, Gobierno Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866.
[92] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 82.
[93] Herrera, *Dentro de la República*, 118–120.

renovate the San Luis church in early 1863.[94] Meanwhile, Lozada petitioned the Guadalajara See for a new parish centered in San Luis. In a series of letters in 1862, Lozada laid out the geography of the parish and even suggested a specific cleric, one Prudencio Santillan, explaining that the See would have difficulty finding another priest willing to accept a post in such an impoverished parish.[95] Most of these letters at first went unanswered.

But Lozada's pillage of Santiago, coupled with his growing political clout, forced the ecclesiastical hierarchy to respond. Just weeks before Lozada overtook the Liberal forces north of Tepic, the Tepic government granted "city" status to San Luis and renamed it San Luis de Lozada. Furthermore, it would be the head town of the canton's second district. Pochotitán, Tequepexpan, Zapotán, Santa María del Oro, and Camichín fell within its jurisdiction.[96] Armed with this success, Lozada again submitted his request for a parish to the Guadalajara See in March 1863, and this time the ecclesiastical hierarchy compromised. A new parish was never to be officially erected, but Lozada's priest was granted permission to administer marriages and baptisms at the temple in San Luis, and the parishioners in the towns Lozada named for his new district would now be permitted to attend religious functions there. This deprived their official parishes of important obventions: a San Luis-based parish *de facto*, if not *de jure*.[97] Essentially, Lozada negotiated in dialectic with civil and religious authorities in order to obtain religious privileges for the frontier region.

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[94] Brittsan, "Brigand Nation," 3–4; and AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 23 March 1863.
[95] Ibid. While no further description is given of presbyter D. Prudencio Santillan, contemporaneous documents cite an "Indian parish priest," José Prudencio Santillan, living in Alta California in the late 1840s; Skinner, *The Beginnings of San Francisco*, 571.
[96] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 178.
[97] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 1 July 1863.

As the Miter granted steep concessions to a less-than-orthodox rebel leader, so, too, did fronterizo parishioners return to the Church in droves. According to Jala clergy, religious observance and piety steadily increased through the 1860s. Soon after Fr. Galindo (the priest responsible for selling off all confraternity goods and land) left in 1855, a series of more amenable priests occupied the benefice through the Second Empire. In September of that year, priest José de Meza began a nine-year stint and in that time reported a steadily improving relationship with his parishioners. In defiance of the new constitution prohibiting religious procession, for example, the "vecinos of Jala" in mid-1861 sought and received permission to parade the image of Our Lord of the Most Holy Sacrament around the chapel cemetery.[98] Furthermore, even though any remaining funds of the confraternities of the Purification and the Immaculate Conception were exhausted in 1860, their cults continued at least through the early years of that decade, supported by the tithes of some "pious persons."[99]

Unlike the bitter rivalry that characterized the relationship between priests and parishioners in 1840s–50s Jala, with the onset of war this tension relaxed as the opposing sides reached compromise. For their part, Jala clergy became more attuned to the financial desperation of their flock, and frequently did not charge even the *arancel* for such obventions as burials. In the latter years of the 1860s, a Franciscan friar took over the benefice in Jala. Fr. Francisco Valadéz instituted what would become a popular Thursday Mass—popular likely because he did not charge a tithe.[100] Moreover, Indians in that community consistently expected to pay lower parish

[98] Ibid., Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, 14 July 1861.
[99] Ibid., 14 June 1863.
[100] Ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866, 4 Jan. 1866.

obventions than those considered non-Indians. Valadéz wisely sidestepped the fee-schedule conflicts that had undermined his predecessors and disregarded the schedule altogether, instead levying fees based on individual circumstance.[101] The friar also regularly held "missions" in Jala like the one he described at the beginning of this chapter, which functioned like religious revivals presided over by visiting regular missionaries.[102]

One of the principal reasons for this revival was the clergy's increased attention to the countryside. Fr. Valadéz on multiple occasions received permission to restore chapels and celebrate Mass in scattered ranches and small towns, where he was well received.[103] The subject town of Jomulco offers one example. The town, an *ayuda de parroquia* that was home to two small chapels, paid the bill for a new stone altar to replace a deteriorating wooden one in 1863.[104] And Fr. Valadéz in 1866 began to celebrate Mass on festival days in Jomulco due to rising demand.[105] Other frontier towns on the outskirts of existing parishes, such as Tequepexpan and Huajimic, soon capitalized on this religious de-centering. Groups of parishioners in these communities petitioned Lozada during the Second Empire to intervene with the Guadalajara See so that they, too, could obtain resident clergy. Archbishop Espinosa y Dávalos reluctantly complied with the strongman's requests, despite the diocese's chronic shortage of ecclesiastical personnel.[106]

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[101] Ibid., carpeta 1867–1868, 6 Oct. 1867.
[102] For example, see ibid., 31 Jan. 1866.
[103] For example, see ibid., caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, 9 Dec. 1865.
[104] Ibid., 4 Sept. 1861; and ibid., 7 Sept. 1863.
[105] Ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866, 4 Jan. 1866.
[106] Brittsan, "Brigand Nation," 4–5.

Some priest-parishioner conflict continued into this period, of course. But this conflict did not center on control of property. Instead, as would be expected from rural communities suddenly granted an extraordinary degree of local control over religious worship, these conflicts tended to center around priests' prolonged absences and their unwanted interference in heterodox practices. In 1866, for example, two of Lozada's subordinates signed a petition to the Guadalajara See—along with a number of other representatives of the "non-Indian and Indian" residents of Santa María del Oro—complaining that their parish priest lived in Tepic and only visited the community on Sundays. Furthermore, while he was in town, Fr. Cosme de Santa Anna seemed less interested in ministering to parishioners than in tending to the "veritable silver estate" he ran from his home.[107] The Guadalajara See sent an investigator to Santa María del Oro who confirmed these complaints, and suggested Santa Anna be placed under a more senior cleric.[108]

For their part, some Jala residents complained in 1867 that Fr. Valadéz was too zealous, attacking "all our religious customs, which we have observed from time immemorial."[109] As Valadéz himself explained, he had suppressed a "ridiculous farce" of the Passion that Jala's Indians were accustomed to perform during Holy Week. Soon afterward, Atanasio Ramos—the longtime critic of meddling priests—threatened Valadéz in the street, asking, "with what do hope to continue the Church fabric? Don't you see that the pueblo is impoverished and nobody can help you?" But despite Valadéz's complaint of this encounter to the Guadalajara See, and the

[107] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 15 Jan. 1866.
[108] Ibid., 22 Jan. 1866.
[109] Ibid., Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868, 10 May 1867.

priest's exceptional past performance (as discussed above), he was replaced by another cleric whom Ramos had suggested within two years.[110]

No matter the rewards that civil officials heaped on him, Lozada understood that religion—not military accolades—was the ligament to the frontier movement. As he would explain in an 1867 retrospective of his career, in the first years of his rebellion Lozada interpreted politics solely through its "religious aspect" and thus guided rebels toward Conservatism.[111] His subsequent preoccupations bear the truth of this statement, from the oratory for the Santiago Christ to the parish of San Luis. Furthermore, the modesty of his appeals to the Guadalajara See, along with the rapport he maintained with area clergy, contrasts sharply with the lavish rewards bestowed upon him by military authorities and the relative coolness with which he received them.

[110] Ibid., 10 Oct. 1867; and ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, 12 April 1869.
[111] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 267.

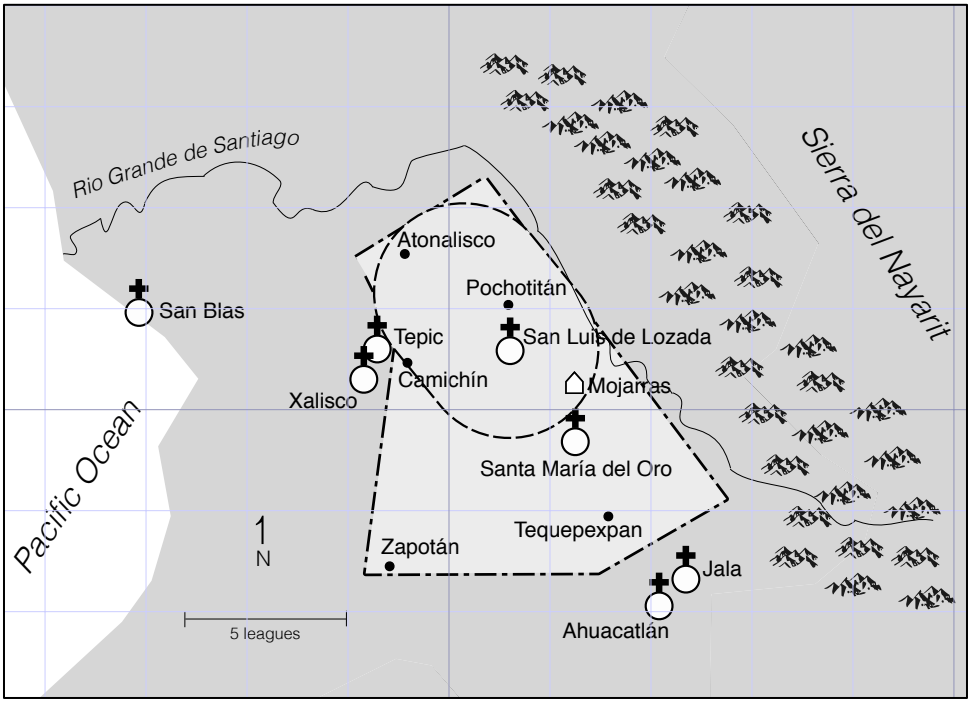

Figure 6: The Approximate Relative Jurisdictions of San Luis de Lozada. The parish limits fall within those of the city.[112]

Lozada made only moderate demands of ecclesiastical personnel. The proposed San Luis-based parish included only the towns of Pochotitán and Atonalisco. The remaining settlements were haciendas and small ranches on the outskirts of the parishes of Jalisco, Tepic, and Santa María del Oro, such as Camichín and Mojarras. Although there are no population estimates for these smaller communities, the three towns had a combined population of 860 in 1843, and the total proposed parish likely hovered around one thousand souls.[113] Proving Lozada's claim of an impoverished parish, in 1869–70 the San Luis priest administered fewer than 10 baptisms per month and earned an annual salary of 360 pesos.[114] Santa María del Oro, meanwhile, ministered to an estimated 5,000 parishioners at mid century. The Jala parish *fábrica* counted on an average

[112] Map drawn by the author. Compiled from maps in Gerhard, *The North Frontier*.
[113] Costilla, *Noticias geográficas*, 136, 138.
[114] Brittsan, "Brigand Nation," 6.

of 16 baptisms per month in 1866–67.[115] The San Luis parish did not draw a significant income away from its surrounding parishes. Lozada also sustained relationships with local clergy. Beyond Prudencio Santillan, San Luis attracted a number of other resident clerics through the 1870s, such as presbyter Francisco Jaime in 1865 and later the priest Ramón Muñoz.[116] One of Lozada's subordinates, Praxedis Núñez, also attracted a presbyter Verdusco to his splinter group in late 1872.[117] Even priests bearing bad tidings visited Lozada in San Luis, although with extraordinary deference. The new parish priest of Santa María del Oro in early 1865 informed "his Excellency" the general that his *de facto* parish had come to an end now that the exigencies of war had passed. Lozada's response was telling: although he agreed that the priest had done well to come to him with this news, Lozada would leave it to the town elders to decide the parish's fate. In effect, a respectful "I obey, but do not comply."[118]

In contrast, Lozada remained ambivalent toward civil and military authorities despite their generous attention. San Luis's civil jurisdiction, for instance, was official and much larger than its ecclesiastical semi-jurisdiction. It subsumed another head town, that of Santa María del Oro, making the combined population total for the new district around 3,500.[119] And Lozada famously refused to even meet imperial authorities. Multiple emissaries, and even the Emperor Maximilian himself, sought to meet Lozada on numerous occasions from 1864–67 in order to keep him within the imperial fold. But the strongman was well aware that such meetings were unlikely to

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[115] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 12 May 1862; Ibid., Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866; and ibid., carpeta 1867–1868.
[116] Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 14 Feb. 1865; and Brittsan, "Brigand Nation," 6–8.
[117] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 227.
[118] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, 20 Jan. 1865.
[119] López Cotilla, *Noticias geográficas*, 136, 140, 145.

impress his followers, and furthermore would only expose him to unnecessary risk of capture. When Maximilian asked field marshal Bazaine in 1865 to convince Lozada to meet with him in Mexico City, the field commander explained that this would not happen as Lozada was wary of being detained in the capital.[120] Again, in the Second Empire's waning years, civil authorities went to great lengths to retain Lozada after he submitted his resignation from military duties in 1866. Lozada was twice offered large promotions in July and September of that year, first as Chief of the Division of Nayarit and second as *comandante general* of the departments of Nayarit, Sinaloa, and Sonora, operating fully independently of imperial command. He nevertheless turned down both ranks and declined to meet an emissary sent to Nayarit to meet with him.[121]

In the end, Lozada and his supporters had become disillusioned with the Empire, like many of his Conservative compatriots. Their frustration with imperial land legislation is detailed above. Furthermore, the relationship between Lozada's forces and the French military were typically strained. Both Lozada and Rivas led campaigns to support French troops along the northwestern littoral, for example, and both quickly returned to Nayarit disgusted. Rivas, for his part, complained in late 1866 that his efforts in Mazatlán were meaningless and, "to a certain point, ridiculous," due to interference from the French commander in the port.[122] Lozada's mistrust of French forces had disastrous consequences. Rather than joining the French column in Mazatlán

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[120] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 189.
[121] AHSEDENA, Cancelados, Manuel Lozada, 10 July 1866; ibid., 18 July 1866; ibid., 28 July 1866; and ibid., 27 Sept. 1866. And while there is no document that explicitly states Lozada refused to meet the imperial emissary sent in July 1866, Carlos Rivas—acting as the *comandante militar* of Mazatlán at that time—reports in August of that year that he would try to meet Lozada in San Luis and send back word; ibid., 30 July 1866; ibid., Carlos Rivas, 23 August 1866.
[122] Ibid., 12 Oct. 1866.

in early 1865, Lozada chose to camp in nearby Concordia, where Gen. Corona attacked and scattered the divided army.[123]

Instead, Lozada and his subordinates sought to restructure the regional political environment, especially during the late Second Empire and continuing in earnest in the early 1870s. This essentially involved bringing backcountry communities into the political realm and recognizing the rights of the rural underclass. It must be emphasized that frontereños did not seek autonomy, but rather more effective government. This government responded more swiftly and justly to their religious and political demands than had any Liberal or Conservative regime—or the Second Empire, for that matter.

From 1854 to 1863, San Luis was elevated from pueblo to city to subprefecture, putting Lozada at the center of the frontier legal system. He issued decrees meant to curb crime and maintain order in the region. These were met with ambivalence. A Barron, Forbes & Co. representative lauded Lozada's control over the backcountry, for instance, explaining in a letter to the London Foreign Office that this peace allowed the free flow of commerce.[124] But another Tepic resident complained of Lozada's rule in 1864, claiming he summarily tried and executed any suspected of crimes "from the simple theft of something worth a penny to scandalous assault, including deaths, rape, and arson."[125] Further consolidating his rule after the fall of the Second Empire, Lozada began to hold annual juntas at San Luis, convoking the political representatives of

[123] NLB, Edmund Joy Collection, "Reminiscencias históricas escritas por el general Mariano Ruiz veterano de 1862, el día 15 de septiembre de 1926," box 1, folios 34–35.
[124] Ibarra, *El comercio y el poder*, 437–438.
[125] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 184.

frontier towns in January after the harvest.[126] The jefe político of Tepic in 1872 admitted that San Luis had been the effective seat of government since 1867. The towns of his district had formed

> "a pact of alliance, in which they agreed to care and watch for the security of the district and all its inhabitants, naming a jefe from among themselves to reside in San Luis, and a war council formed from various jefes of the towns to recognize and judge their towns' general affairs."[127]

The topics discussed at the annual meetings ranged from the mundane—fines and other penalties for those who refused to pay the school tax—to the extraordinary—such as battle plans for the 1873 invasions of Jalisco, Sinaloa, and Sonora.[128] In addition, San Luis housed a prison beginning in 1869.[129] Especially important meetings concluded with calls for clerical intervention, such as in 1870 when Lozada requested a novena of Masses be celebrated in each Nayarit parish "for the success of the compromise that the assembly has recently reached." Unsure of the correct course of action, the parish priest of Ahuacatlán sought the opinion of the Guadalajara See, adding, "I understand the most prudent measure is to comply."[130]

While this point remains to be further explored, Lozada also adopted a rhetoric that emphasized the rural identity of his movement. In his 1867 retrospective, for example, he explained that he had been allied with the "indigenous peoples of the United Pueblos" since the beginning of the rebellion. At the start, these towns were "defenseless, oppressed, and vulnerable to be sacrificed at the whim of any party, while now they are armed and organized such that not only are they

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[126] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Ahuacatlán, caja 2, exp. 20, 24 Jan. 1870.
[127] CARSO, *Memoria que el C. Gral. de División Ignacio Mejía, ministro de guerra y marina, presenta al 7o. congreso constitucional, 1873*, 107–134.
[128] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 297–305, 319.
[129] CARSO, *Memoria*, 107–134.
[130] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Ahuacatlán, caja 2, exp. 20, 24 Jan. 1870.

respected and taken seriously, but the government attempts to rely on their support and cooperation."[131] Beyond arming and organizing the pueblos, Lozada also renamed his government to reflect frontier and sierra sensibility. While Miramón and Juárez recognized the region as an independent entity, they both elected to use the name "Tepic," the name of the area's largest urban hub. But Lozada instead referred to the region as the "State of Nayarit," in homage to the Cora influence from the Sierra Madre. Lozada's choice ultimately stuck, but was not made official until decades after his death in 1917.

Meanwhile, outsiders viewed Lozada's dominion with ambivalence. On one hand, politicians and rebels outside the region recognized this political authority, and negotiated directly with Lozada, bypassing Tepic officials. After Lozada recognized Benito Juárez's accession to the presidency in 1867, Juárez responded by affirming Nayarit's independence from Jalisco as the Military District of Tepic. Plácido Vega, the occasional governor of Sinaloa/rebel/smuggler, continually negotiated and fought with Lozada from 1864 to 1873.[132] And Porfirio Díaz unsuccessfully sought Lozada's support in his 1872 Plan de la Noria. As local lore has it, Díaz offered the Nayarit strongman a bell for the San Luis church as a gift, and it hangs in the belfry to this day.

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[131] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 241–242, 268.
[132] AHSEDENA, Cancelados, Plácido Vega, XI/III/3–1736, 21 April 1867; ibid., 14 May 1867; and Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 226–238.

Figure 7: The Church Belfry in San Luis de Lozada, 2009[133]

On the other hand, anything even remotely "Indian" carried a much more frightening connotation outside the frontier zone. As discussed in chapter 2, Mexican political authorities of all stripes had feared popular rebellion since the early independence uprisings of 1810–12, and the mass movements of the late 1840s further stoked these fears. The so-called Yucatán Caste War that stretched from 1847 to the late nineteenth century served as the archetype of these movements, in which the Indian masses murdered their European-descent masters in a delayed rejection of Spanish colonization. And as we saw in chapter 3, religious and political personnel had measured

[133] Inscription on center bell: "Ascension del Rosario S. Luis d. Lozada Mayo 22 d. 1872."

Nayarit by this standard as early as 1849, when Tepic priest Rafael Homobono Tovar warned that "movements" in the Sierra de Álica could easily coalesce into the northwestern theater of the Yucatán conflict. Lozada himself exacerbated these fears in 1854 when he announced he was working with the Indians of Santa María del Oro to restore their land. The frontier subsequently saw the first of many exoduses of the "non-Indian" population over the next two decades. Whether Lozada had consciously attempted to frighten nearby officials or not, this was the result. A Colotlán governor expressed fear that Lozada would lead a Sierra Madre caste war in 1858.[134] Frontereños' subsequent actions belied such an intent. Their alliances with Conservative regimes and imperial authorities, and even a détente with Juárez from 1867 to 1872, made it clear that lozadistas were interested in maintaining a relationship with central authorities and not attempting to cast out any supposed *gachupines*. Nonetheless, Lozada continued to embody the predominant stereotypes of Indian savagery in the popular imagination.

Contemporary media sources also portrayed Lozada as a violent thug. In an account of his encounter with Lozada in 1860s Tepic, for instance, English writer William Bullock Hall described his anxiety before meeting the "monster." But when he finally caught sight of Lozada, he was surprised at the general's humble appearance: "[h]is dress was excessively unpretending […] In manner he was extremely reserved, but courteous, and, I could with difficulty bring myself to believe that his hands were so deeply dyed with blood, as I was assured that they

[134] "The caste war that this Jefatura has predicted for a long time, because it saw the combustibles gathered that would ignite it, has now developed with the aid and discord of the terrible Manuel Lozada in the pueblos of the Sierra del Nayarit […] Until now, this war has not surpassed the limits of this Sierra; but soon we will see it extend, not only in the territory that was formerly known as the Province of Nuevo Toledo (encompassing parts of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Durango, and Sinaloa), but also to the interior of this canton and to various populations of these states outside the Sierra."; AHEJ, Gobernación, Indios, caja 2, G-9-858, 10183.

were."[135] Indeed, despite Lozada's attempts to recast rural political identity and governance as a viable alternative, his defeat and execution in 1873 were touted as the defeat of barbarism.

Figure 8: La Columna de la Pacificación, Erected in the Tepic City Square in 1873

In the end, there were two principal dynamics working against Lozada in his final assault in 1873. First, external pressure steadily increased after 1867 as Nayarit effectively remained independent of the Restored Republic. The Tepic jefe político in 1872, Juan Sanromán, portrayed a slowly expanding *lozadeña* state in his report to Mexico City authorities. He freely admitted that frontereños under Lozada comprised the territory's security forces.[136] Moreover, surrounding towns such as Colotlán to the east of the Sierra and Mascota to the south incorporated themselves into the Tepic state. The central government would no longer tolerate a

[135] Bullock, *Across Mexico in 1864–5*, 330.
[136] Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," 60–66.

rebel redoubt in its ceaseless quest for stability. Even though Lozada demurred when Porfirio Díaz sought help in his 1872 attempted coup, the fact that Lozada could still make that choice demonstrated both his power and a threat to national security. For that matter, Liberal turncoat Plácido Vega remained ensconced in Nayarit—another ill omen for the newly elected Pres. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. Lozada sent a commission of three subordinates to Mexico City in late 1872 to negotiate recognition of Lerdo de Tejada's government along with Nayarit's continuing independence. But the new president rejected this arrangement, and warned that federal troops would invade the region unless frontereños turned in their arms. It remains unclear why Lozada risked a three-pronged offensive—pushing into Jalisco, Sinaloa, and Sonora—rather than maintaining his position of strength in the Sierra. It may be that Vega's ambitions were behind this final push, or that Lozada anticipated more support from invaded communities and overestimated his forces' skill in open battle. But whatever the case, his combined forces met defeat in the northern and eastern theaters, and against Ramón Corona in the small community of Mojonera just outside Guadalajara, in January 1873.

Second, during and after their defeat, internal conflicts split apart the frontier coalition among Lozada's subordinates. And these disagreements were longstanding. Lozada was only able to extend his influence across the frontier through loyal caciques who exercised power over a small cluster of towns or over particular groups in larger towns. But these caciques also exercised their own independence and ambitions, especially in the latter years of Lozada's movement. Domingo Nava of the Valle de Tepic and Praxedis Núñez of Atonalisco—a colonel and squadron commander, respectively—fell on opposite sides of a land dispute in 1868–9. Rivas was called to mediate, but he stalled for months, undoubtedly aware of his limited authority in other caciques'

domains.[137] Two other subordinates, Eusebio Plodo of Jomulco and Antonio Cambero of Jala, supported and vilified the Jala parish priest, respectively, in an 1867 attempt to find a new priest.[138] Moreover, Lozada was forced to buttress his relationship with some of these subcommanders through loans, but with mixed results. While Rivas, to whom Lozada lent nearly 3,000 pesos in 1868, remained faithful until his death from illness in 1870, Miguel Oceguera apparently refused to pay back his 600-peso loan.[139] Demonstrating the limits of his authority, Lozada pursued repayment in court. But no amount of money or cajoling could persuade each of his subordinates to remain faithful as federal troops entered Nayarit. Nava, Núñez, and Oceguera later denounced Lozada and aided in his capture in 1873.

Conclusion

At its inception and in the short term, the frontier rebellion that coalesced under the leadership of Manuel Lozada owed its survival to other interests and trends in Jalisco's seventh canton. First, the region was already on a centrifugal trajectory away from Jalisco's economic and political capital of Guadalajara. Tepic had long been a major commercial conduit in western Mexico, ever since the Pacific naval port of San Blas was opened to trade in the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, the largest merchant house in Tepic—Barron, Forbes & Co.—supported Conservative politicians, pitting it against the Liberals in control of Jalisco government at mid century. This political divide became openly violent beginning in 1855, when a Conservative

[137] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 130.
[138] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868, 27 June 1868; and ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, 18 May 1868.
[139] AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1868, folios 235–236; and ibid., 1869, folios 19–20. Notably, Barron, Forbes & Co. had loaned 1,500 pesos to Oceguera in 1866; ibid., 1866, vol. 1, folio 48.

coup in Tepic led to a Liberal reprisal that escalated into an international confrontation between Mexico and England. This situation polarized public opinion between the two parties across the canton and paved the way for the Reform War.

And second, Tepic's independence from Jalisco also served national stability. Jaliscan elites and military men had frequently sponsored insurrections against the national government since independence. Any move to undermine that perennial source of instability would be welcome from the standpoint of the central government. When Conservative forces took Tepic in 1859, the Conservative government in Mexico City did not hesitate to officially break off Jalisco's richest canton from the state.

But over the long term, frontereños' religious and political reforms sustained the state of Nayarit in the face of successive regime changes in Mexico City. Put simply, Manuel Lozada gradually shifted religious and political authority from the region's urban hubs to the backcountry of the frontier. Lozada first acted as an instrument of vengeance, occupying ex-confraternity land and kidnapping a popular *bulto* of Christ to install at his home. The Guadalajara See nevertheless compromised with this unorthodox leader, and Lozada became mediator between disenfranchised Nayarit parishioners and diocesan authorities. He rearranged the frontier parishes to establish his hometown as a parish seat, and helped fix resident priests in the frontier's farther reaches. In terms of land, Lozada established his own agrarian commissions to redistribute contested property along the frontier during the Second Empire. He later established a sort of corporate democracy centered on San Luis, with annual meetings between Lozada and his subordinates acting as representatives of their respective domains. Due to the social and

political context of the region and the period, outside authorities cast his movement in an Indian hue, and consequently viewed it with fear. Nevertheless, this was not an attempt by unconquered indigenous peoples to cast off domination by European peoples.

For that matter, the frontier rebellion was not a millenarian revolt. Neither Lozada nor his subordinates set themselves up as backcountry saints or prophets. There were no "speaking crosses" as in contemporary Yucatán, or divinely inspired healers, as in late-nineteenth-century Tomóchic.[140] Lozada merely maintained good relationships with various clergy, and created a space for them along the frontier. The religious revival during the Second Empire was a relatively orthodox one, where parishioners returned to the Church and performed the necessary rites and sacraments. Rebellious parishioners of the early 1850s had been seeking greater control over religious property and worship, but they were largely satisfied during the 1860s and 70s with greater attention from a clergy more attuned to their material and spiritual needs.

[140] Rugeley, *Rebellion Now and Forever*, 3; and Vanderwood, *The Power of God*, 303.

Part II

Querétaro

CHAPTER 5

Colonization, Conquest, and Land Conflict in the Sierra Gorda Queretana, 1530–1811

Introduction

In the summer of 1808, Pablo Ramón de Vega recalled the destruction he witnessed among the towns of Tolimán's jurisdiction in the foothills of the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro only two years before. A force of more than 100 soldiers and hacienda tenants had blazed through the five small Indian communities at that time, capturing dozens of people and setting fire to more than fifty homes and chapels. For de Vega, that attack had been nothing less than a conquest perpetrated by "mulattos […] our archenemies." He explained the irony in his letter to the Real Audiencia in Mexico City. "[O]ur ancestors were the conquistadors of these lands and countryside; as a price, many of them gave their lives and spilled their blood in defense of the Crown. … [which] gave them these lands on which they maintained themselves."[1]

The first three hundred years after the Otomí arrival in the Sierra Gorda is a history of racial conflict and cooperation. Although Otomí settlers served as the colonial vanguard in Querétaro, by the late eighteenth century they struggled to retain their inheritance as an expanding European and mixed-race population attempted to push them out of the region or reduce them to servitude. As a key element of that struggle, Otomí communities in the Sierra Gorda began to cooperate with newly installed priests and soldiers in order to guard against the worst abuses of a dominant

[1] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 14, 05c139, 17 Aug. 1808, folios 22–25.

landowning class. This chapter details that development, and it does so by distinguishing three key phases in the colonial period.

First, Otomí settlers—not Europeans—established Querétaro as an important agricultural supply site for the mines of the Bajío, in addition to beachheads of Catholicism in the mountains. That an indigenous group from the central valley pacified a portion of northern New Spain is not extraordinary. Mixtec and Tlaxcalteca groups helped colonize the frontier of the Sierra del Nayarit, as discussed in chapter 1. But Otomí settlers did not merely pacify Querétaro. They dominated its economic, political, and religious life. Otomí caciques in the lowlands developed sufficient wealth and power to deflect colonial authorities' attempts to wrestle away their influence for more than a century. And Otomí communities along the frontier of the Sierra Gorda served as the sole buffer between "barbarism" and Christianity, between the unsubjugated highlands indigenous populations and the Querétaro lowlands, until the mid seventeenth century.

Second, the mid-eighteenth-century "conquest" of the Sierra introduced a new, mixed-race population that sought to subjugate all serrano groups, regardless of heritage. A renewed impulse for silver in the Bourbon period drove European and mestizo soldiers and settlers deep into the Sierra Gorda. Once installed, they acted in brutal fashion, enslaving the indigenous population and violently taking land. Beginning with their introduction to the region, the new settlers did not distinguish between the unsubjugated indigenous population and the Otomí of the frontier. Long-settled Otomí groups, the guardians of Catholic Christianity and soldiers of the Crown, were treated as dangerous "barbarians." By the mid eighteenth century, these communities violently fought back.

Third, Otomí leaders in the Sierra Gorda began to negotiate with certain members of the European and mixed-race population—namely, priests and soldiers—even as they continued to fight with well-connected landowners. A sprawling Otomí population encroached into nearby haciendas and large ranches, or at least close enough to spark dispute, and both sides destroyed property and forcefully resisted any cessions of land. Meanwhile, local priests and soldiers aided Otomí land litigation in exchange for help in their own disputes. Hacendados, in turn, lashed back against Otomí settlement in disputed territory and attempted to return the frontier Otomí population to a position of servitude, but with only limited effect. Otomí caciques would only gain more authority in the nineteenth-century Sierra Gorda Queretana.

This study builds primarily on the religious and economic scholarship of the Sierra Gorda during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Regarding the literature on serrano religion, José Antonio Cruz Rangel details the gradual European penetration of the Sierra Gorda Queretana in this period, for example, providing a wealth of data on serrano missions, presidios, and military campaigns.[2] Gerardo Lara Cisneros rounds out this picture by including the Otomí voice, primarily in the Xichú region of the northern Sierra. There he finds a redoubt of indigenous religion combined with Catholicism, "giving origin to a complex religious mixture that can be called popular or indigenous…"[3] But while these studies provide an excellent overview of the development of serrano religious culture, they largely fail to disaggregate the varied Indian communities of the region. The Otomí residents of Xichú de Indios certainly resisted European largeholders by maintaining an alternative cult in the eighteenth century, for instance, but other

[2] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*.
[3] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 82. *Cf*. Lara, *El cristianismo en el espejo indígena*.

Otomí pueblos to the southeast instead sought ecclesiastical support against the threat from local haciendas.

Meanwhile, Marta Eugenia García Ugarte and, most recently, John Tutino have chronicled the rise and fall of Otomí dominance in the Querétaro region. García Ugarte places this development in the context of changing land tenure from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. As measured by the expansion and contraction of hacienda property, Otomí pueblos and other smallholders had been pushed out of the Sierra by aggressive largeholders by the late colonial period, and would only regain ground in the mid to late nineteenth century after the Reform wars.[4] Tutino echoed this view in his monumental *Making a New World*, finding that, while Otomí fighters and settlers first brought the colonial order to Querétaro, they had lost their position of dominance by the late eighteenth century.[5] But in their discussions of Otomí loss, these studies do not take into account the steps that frontier communities took to deflect outright despoliation, such as compromise with other elites in the region. This chapter aims to both re-examine the religious change in the Otomí pueblos along the Sierra Gorda frontier and to analyze the developing patron-client networks that sustained these communities amid the land struggles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The Establishment of an Otomí Stronghold in Querétaro, 1530–1744

[4] García, *Hacendados y rancheros*. This is a Querétaro example of Tutino's agrarian compression-decompression cycle, of course; Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico.*
[5] Tutino, *Making a New World*, 326.

The Sierra Gorda is an extension of the Sierra Madre Oriental and serves as the eastern boundary of the Bajío altiplano, dividing it from the Gulf farther to the east. This range stretches from the present-day states of Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí to the northwest, to Hidalgo and Veracruz to the southeast. The portion that falls within Querétaro is at the center of the Sierra, and served as the northernmost boundary to the Aztec empire of the central valley in the pre-Hispanic period. The population that inhabited the Sierra Gorda Queretana left no documentary record. Consequently, little is known of the groups that held the gateway to the region that the Mexica disparagingly labeled the Gran Chichimeca. Archaeologists have nevertheless suggested that the semi-nomadic Pames of Querétaro and the Jonaces of the Guanajuato Sierra gradually moved into the region left vacant by departing sedentary groups sometime after the twelfth century.[6]

Meanwhile, the Otomí occupied an important, if understated, position in the Aztec empire. They were the most populous group at the time of conquest, inhabiting the mountains surrounding the central valley and clustered at Jilotepec, just south of Querétaro. Nahua-speaking peoples disparaged them as primitive. Charles Gibson dryly explains, for instance, that during the colonial period there were three grades of *pulque*, a fermented beverage made from the maguey succulent: fine, ordinary, and otomí.[7] Nevertheless, other central-valley groups regarded the Otomí as effective fighters. Both the Mexica and Tlaxcalteca deployed them as garrison soldiers to defend territory. Otomí were likely among the first warriors that Spanish explorers encountered in Mesoamerica, in service to Tlaxcala.[8]

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[6] García, *Breve historia de* Querétaro, 21–22.
[7] Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 10.
[8] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 29–32.

Spanish colonizers, too, would use the Otomí as a vanguard force. Once liberated from Mexica domination and pushed from Jilotepec by Spanish encomenderos, Otomí settlers spread north and incorporated Pame territory in the sixteenth century. They first occupied the Querétaro lowlands. While the massed military forces of the central valley were off fighting the Mixtón War on the western frontier, an Otomí trader named Conní was baptized as Hernando de Tapia and quietly settled the pueblo of Querétaro in the 1530s and 40s. Other Otomí settlers moved into the region from the south and quickly established themselves on prime agricultural land and pastures.

Surrounded by hostile, unsubjugated indigenous groups throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, the Otomí instead allied themselves with the Crown. During the Chichimec War, Otomí caciques led troops into battle against the Jonaces of the northern Sierra Gorda and the Pames who still resisted colonial rule to the east. Forces under Tapia, for example, subjugated the Jonaz region of Xichú. Viceregal authorities also planted Otomí colonies along the silver route to defend merchant convoys through the Bajío.[9] Beyond military support, Otomí settlers adopted Hispanic agriculture. Sheep ranching exploded in the lowlands.[10] Nearly one million head grazed on the pastures surrounding the city by the late sixteenth century.[11] Furthermore, the region long remained a major supplier of European products, with Otomí towns

[9] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 85, 202–203.
[10] Indeed, the prolific sheep quickly overwhelmed their new environment elsewhere in central Mexico, consuming unfenced Indian crops and filling the space left after an epidemic blazed through the indigenous population. See Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 4–5; and Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*.
[11] Tutino, *Making A New World*, 99.

providing quince, peaches, figs, and roses for a regional market through the colonial period.[12] For Spanish observers, the Otomí transformation from "primitive" hill folk to wealthy, exemplary colonists was stunning. The chronicler Francisco Ramos de Cárdenas, for example, described Querétaro in 1582 as "one of the most beautiful and picturesque, and blessed with seasonal fruits, that there are in New Spain."[13]

Otomí leaders also patronized the Catholic Church and left an indelible impression on the region's religious life. An aging, wealthy Tapia funded the construction of the first Franciscan monastery in the town of Querétaro, as well as a hospital endowed with a sheep ranch of some 9,000 head.[14] His son founded the convent Santa Clara de Jesús, which had become the largest mortgage lender in the entire Bajío region by the early sixteenth century and would continue to dominate banking through the remainder of the colonial period.[15] Furthermore, the tithe revenue from Querétaro was significant enough to spark a decades-long jurisdictional dispute between the Diocese of Michoacán—to which it had belonged since 1537—and the Archdiocese of Mexico. The dispute was settled in 1586 in the latter's favor.[16] But the most significant Otomí contribution to the spiritual life of the region was the Virgin of Pueblito. Despite her humble beginnings in a shrine on the outskirts of Querétaro, the virgin would become the urban area's most popular religious adoration by the eighteenth century, far outstripping other popular adorations such as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Queretano elites attempted to move Our Lady to the city, but at her Franciscan caretakers' urging, they settled on months-long visits to cure disease,

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[12] AHAM, 1765–6, caja 92, exp. 16, letter from the Mexican See to Laureano Diego and Dionicio Ortiz, 29 Jan. 1766.
[13] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 46.
[14] Ibid., 45–46.
[15] Tutino, *Making A New World*, 112.
[16] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 55–56.

bring rain, and protect the Santa Clara convent from lightning.[17] Civil authorities officially recognized her protection in the postcolonial period and adopted her as the patroness of both city and state in 1830, at which point her popularity spread deep into the Sierra Gorda.[18]

Otomí success in the Querétaro lowlands soon attracted a diverse population, and the region was slowly, and peacefully, integrated. At first, colonial authorities attempted to force Spanish immigration by fiat. Beginning in the 1570s, for instance, urban mercedes granted to Spaniards stipulated that they settle in the Querétaro town center.[19] Moreover, two different viceroys forcibly removed both Hernando de Tapia and his son from their posts as *república* governor in order to curtail their influence. Neither of these maneuvers was particularly effective. As John Tutino points out in a recent study, Otomí caciques remained a powerful economic force in the region as they controlled land and labor into the seventeenth century. Spanish immigrants were forced to negotiate with this bloc in order to enter the lowland economy.[20] Elite integration was slow. As late as 1586, only two of the roughly 100 Spanish residents of Querétaro possessed wealth totaling 15,000 to 25,000 pesos, respectively.[21] Nearly half the city's population remained distinctly Otomí in 1743.[22] Nonetheless, this Otomí identity can be overstated. While people of Otomí descent and language long remained a potent economic and religious force in the Querétaro lowlands, surely it is just as remarkable the degree to which they adopted Hispanic norms. Poor Otomí cultivators farmed European crops, wealthy Otomí adopted Spanish

[17] Tutino, *Making A New World*, 208.
[18] Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images*, 187–188.
[19] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 75.
[20] Tutino, *Making A New World*, 112–115.
[21] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 71.
[22] Tutino, *Making A New World*, 199.

surnames, and all patronized a Franciscan cult. Querétaro lowlands society was a negotiated enterprise, and represented a compromise between Spanish colonizers and their Indian allies.

Meanwhile, much of the Sierra Gorda remained a haven for "barbarous Indians" well into the eighteenth century. Reminiscent of descriptions of the Sierra del Nayarit from the same period, the Sierra Gorda remained a stubborn bastion of paganism and violence near the center of New Spain. The founder of Cadereyta, for instance, explained in the mid seventeenth century that "the Chichimec Indians of the Sierra Gorda caused much trouble for the faithful [in the lowlands], taking away their haciendas [and] causing many deaths…" Highland Pame groups rebelled during the Chichimec Wars and conducted raids as far into the valley as Querétaro, causing residents to briefly abandon the town. A 1550 massacre in Jalpan left nearly 300 pacified Indians dead, likely pacified Pames.[23] The Jonaces of the northern Sierra proved the most resistant to colonial rule and periodically rebelled against the intruding state well into the eighteenth century.

In order to guard the lowlands and defend the silver route, colonial forces established buffer towns along the Sierra's frontier. A mixed-race mining town soon developed at Xichú. After an abortive attempt to establish a town with "Chichimec allies" in the 1540s, Otomí forces under Hernando de Tapia pacified the area in the late sixteenth century. More than 500 tributaries were registered in the town by 1571. By the 1590s, San Juan Bautista de Xichú de Indios was an expanding mining settlement with Otomí, Nahua, Tarascan, Spanish, and African immigrants. The town also received a beneficed priest quite early, in 1586, the same year the Archdiocese of

[23] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 127, 201, 207.

Mexico officially assumed jurisdiction. This was likely due to the allure of mining revenue for the Church.[24]

But while the Xichú silver veins attracted a diverse population and enjoyed a robust economy, the Otomí colonies along the central frontier of the Sierra remained largely homogenous and struggled against belligerent neighbors. Otomí migrants from Jilotepec settled Tolimán in 1532, and roughly a decade later spread out to settle Tolimanejo and Soriano.[25] Franciscan friars followed the settlers and established missions at these communities in the late sixteenth century, which were not secularized until the late eighteenth.[26] As late as 1746, Otomí still dominated the population of San Pedro Tolimán and its subject towns.[27] Other reduced indigenous groups, such as Pames and Jonaces, also moved into the area but had adopted Otomí language and identity.[28] Unlike the Otomí population in the lowlands, which enjoyed peace and prosperity, the highlands missions were constantly under siege. In the sixteenth century unsubjugated Pames raided these missions during the Chichimec War, burning churches and razing ranches.[29] But, by far, the most enduring threat to the land and livelihood of Tolimán and other Indian communities of the frontier was steadily encroaching Spanish settlement.

The Long Conquest of the Sierra Gorda Queretana

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[24] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 139–143.
[25] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 125; and García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 35.
[26] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 268.
[27] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 107–108.
[28] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 275.
[29] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 67.

The pacification of the Sierra Gorda exacerbated the divide between landed Indian communities and large ranches and haciendas from the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries. The frontier Otomí pueblos had long survived through a combination of subsistence farming and home textile manufacture, and maintained their cult with confraternity lands. While these pueblos were socially stratified—certain families maintained power over generations—frontier town leaders were not the influential, wealthy caciques of the lowlands. Thus, when a new population entered the region and immediately claimed substantial ranches for themselves, the existing Otomí communities were relatively powerless to stop them from overstepping their bounds and usurping pueblo land. The result was a long, violent struggle. The conquest of the still unpacified Sierra Gorda was not simply a battle between non-Indian soldiers and unsubjugated indigenous groups, but also between new settlers and existing communities. Ironically, the most salient rebellions of the late eighteenth century took place in communities that had been settled since before the conquest began.

At first, Spanish attempts to penetrate the Sierra were limited to evangelization. Franciscans, and later Augustinians and Dominicans, led expeditions from frontier towns to establish missions in the Pame region of Jalpan and Concá, the Jonaz region around Xichú, and the Huasteca region of Tancoyol and Tancama. These early efforts were largely a failure, at least as far as Spanish authorities and hacendados were concerned. The missions simply did not consolidate a dispersed highlands population into reductions that could easily be tapped for labor. On one hand, hostile indigenous groups continually raided and razed the missions. Most such settlements were founded and refounded multiple times across the early colonial period.[30] On the other hand, the

[30] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 271.

intended targets of these evangelization efforts quickly learned to manipulate the mission system to satisfy their own needs without, in turn, providing the desired labor. As one observer described,

> "[The Chichimec Indians] come down … with their children to seek baptism, and Spaniards as godparents … due to the fact that they give them corn, tobacco, and food, and there are Indians that baptize their children six and eight times for this reason."[31]

At other times, highlands groups would descend during famine and drought only to leave within a few months or years, armed with "the European ways and Christian practices they found most useful."[32] Abandoned following raids or amid financial straits, many of these missions were nothing but ruins when Spanish soldiers came upon them more than a century later, during the armed phase of the conquest.[33]

Beginning in the seventeenth century, Spanish and mestizo settlers and soldiers began making inroads into the Sierra Gorda. Settlement was initially limited to the frontier. Alonso de Tovar y Guzmán was named *capitán de guerra y protector de los indios chichimecas* in 1632 and, by 1640, had founded the Villa of Cadereyta at the gateway to the Sierra. Following the Crown's 1686 order for the "reduction and spiritual conquest of the gentile Indians of the Sierra Gorda and Zimapán mines," Cadereyta expanded its jurisdiction farther north, abutting the holdings of existing Indian frontier towns such as San Pedro Tolimán. In 1718, 22 Spanish families in the Congregación de Bernal appealed to colonial authorities to double their holdings from the original three *caballerías* to six (roughly one square mile), in order to provide for their

[31] Gómez, *La Sierra Gorda de Querétaro*, 173.
[32] Tutino, *Making a New World*, 97.
[33] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 65–66.

expanding numbers. The viceroy granted their request due to their continued work resisting the "barbarous Indians who continually invade this area."[34]

Military settlements moved into the Sierra proper beginning in the mid eighteenth century, displacing most remaining missions and "reducing" Jonaz and Pame groups still outside the colonial sphere. Interested in establishing control over Sierra Gorda land and mines, Spanish and mestizo settlers embarked upon a two-pronged assault. First, they decried missionaries as corrupt, cruel, and ineffective in order to replace them with friars of the civil authorities' choosing. After a tour of the Augustinian mission of Jalpan in 1735–1736, colonel José de Escandón reported that only one friar ministered to more than 6,000 souls. Although 160 years had passed since Jalpan's foundation, in Escandón's estimation the church was a shambles and not one Indian knew how to make the sign of the cross properly. Escandón then proposed the erection of four new missions in the jurisdiction of the old, all administered by Franciscans.[35]

Second, soldiers conducted a series of military campaigns deep in the Sierra Gorda, and in the process removed missionaries entirely from the more remote zones. These smaller missions gradually gave way to villas—communities with a majority Spanish population—and military outposts. The mission of San José Vizarrón offers one example. The Franciscan friar in charge of the mission sought military aid against a threatened Indian uprising in 1740, and, as a result, a presidio was founded within the mission that same year. Once installed as officers in the presidio, José de Trejo, Bernardo Nieto, and Juan and Francisco Olvera turned against those who

[34] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 24, Civil, Legajo 1795–1799: Sobre tierras de la congregación de Bernal (Cadereyta), con los indios gañanes de ellas, letter from D. Francisco Cabrera, 21 Oct. 1717.
[35] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 281–282.

had initially sought their help. The soldiers submitted a complaint against the missionaries for abusing their charges, and applied for a total of seven fully equipped soldiers and 150 militiamen to move into San José Vizarrón. The viceroy agreed. Thirty soldiers and their families remained in 1748 after Escandón's forces blazed through the region and nearly exterminated the missionary dependents as "chichimecs," and Escandón proposed expanding the population around the former mission-presidio, granting newcomers the mission land. Meanwhile, Escandón erected presidios next door to other missions that managed to survive his 1748 onslaught. Friars filed suit against the Villa of Tancamá to protect the Pames situated in the nearby mission of Santiago Jalpan in 1751, for example, but the suit was ultimately suspended.[36]

From early on, it was clear that military conquest was a thinly veiled land grab for an aspirant Spanish and mestizo landowning class. Hundreds of thousands of sheep soon pastured the land surrounding Cadereyta, owned by the descendants of the soldier-settlers. Other, less-fortunate descendants were pushed aside to make room for a few large ranches. A group of soldiers complained in 1719 that their lands outside Cadereyta had all been usurped by large ranchers, and they subsequently requested mercedes farther north in Ajuchitlán and Bernal.[37] Furthermore, pacified Indians were not the only ones brought in to work the land. While parish records dutifully noted the requisite baptisms of pacified "Chichimecs," the records also show that some 168 Otomí were baptized in Cadereyta from 1645–1652, coming from surrounding ranches. Unlike the Otomí colonists of Tolimán, these residents were brought from Jilotepec to Cadereyta to work the ranches given to Spanish settlers.[38] While some of these Otomí eventually organized

[36] Ibid., 242–243, 247, 286.
[37] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 166.
[38] Mendoza, *Historia eclesiástica de Cadereyta*, 38.

into the self-governed pueblo of Tetillas, a critical mass of unincorporated, landless Indian laborers was kept on the outskirts of Spanish settlements in the Cadereyta region into the nineteenth century.[39] This process of land distribution and concentration continued with the eighteenth-century military campaigns. Prior to his 1748 expedition, colonel Escandón sought and received two privileges from the Crown: first, that ultimate authority over all civil and criminal matters in the territory of the Sierra Gorda rest with Escandón, as the Teniente de Capitán General. Second, soldiers engaged in the Sierra would win mercedes of public land and control of pacified Indian labor as a reward for their efforts.[40] As Gerardo Lara Cisneros points out, many of the troops who enlisted in the campaigns of the 1730s and 40s were already established as landowners in the region, and joined up merely to enlarge their holdings.[41] Land distribution often went beyond public territory and swept up mission land, as well. Indians from the mission of San José Xiliapan in 1764 explained that,

> "although they are designated as soldiers, in reality some are not; they do not receive wages beyond that of the usufruct of Indian land … with a slip that they receive from whichever captain or lieutenant colonel they become soldiers, not for pacification, defense, and conservation of the missions … but instead for their destruction."

And once these landowners were installed, observers claimed, they exaggerated the danger of Chichimec invasion in order to frighten competitors away from serrano mines.[42]

In reality, the serrano Indian population was drastically cut down in the armed conquest and its aftermath. The capitán general Escandón practically wiped out the Jonaz communities of the

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[39] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 24, Civil, Legajo 1795–1799: Sobre tierras de la congregación de Bernal (Cadereyta), con los indios gañanes de ellas.
[40] García, *Hacendados y rancheros queretanos*, 36.
[41] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 97.
[42] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 170, 246.

Querétaro sierra in his 1740s campaigns. Those Jonaces and Pames who survived were then congregated in mission communities, where lowland viruses tore through the virgin population. An epidemic from 1746–49 killed off some 1,400 people, and 5,300 more died in 1762.[43] Forced labor on Spanish-owned ranches awaited the survivors. One hacienda counted some 300 slaves among its workers.[44]

For incoming settlers, the more dangerous region—or at least the region more prone to violence—was the frontier zone with its existing landed Indian communities. These communities had pushed back encroaching development through formal complaints and acts of sabotage ever since the foundation of Cadereyta in the mid seventeenth century. As early as 1641, one year after that villa was founded, Otomí residents of San Pedro Tolimán's jurisdiction complained that they were being pushed out of their confraternity holdings along the border with the new villa. Furthermore, they warned, many "Chichimecs" were living within Tolimán's territory (likely Pames) and this group was likely to rebel if pushed too far by invading Spaniards. As they explained, the settlers in Cadereyta

> "have been vexing and bothersome, and continue to be, coming into our homes, lands, and plantings and violently taking from us our corn, maguey, chickens, and livestock […] they want to bring their possessions to our own lands and sites, that under the guise of distributing lands for the Villa, they despoil us of them, such as lands within the pueblo of San Pablo, subject to San Pedro Tolimán, and another site called Las Higuerillas, where many friendly, peaceful Chichimec Indians are congregated, whom we have brought to this place with our industry and skill […] what we fear the most is that the Chichimecs of the Sierra with the

[43] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 117.
[44] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 211–265.

violence and damages of the settlers … will ally with the very belligerent Guacancoros and we will be in grave danger."[45]

With this shrewd argument, the Otomí of Tolimán both distanced themselves from the "Chichimec" Indians of the Sierra and highlighted their own active role in the pacification process. This was no idle boast. "Indian" allies—likely the nearby Otomí—would continue to enlist in campaigns and helped put down a Jonaz rebellion in 1703–4, for example.[46] They also warned of violence to come. Perhaps ironically, this violence would not come from deep within the Sierra, but from Tolimán itself. While the colonial authorities' response to this particular appeal is unknown, Otomí and Spanish settlers contested this zone into the early 1800s.

Some of the most notable examples of this continuing struggle were the troubles in Xichú and Tolimán in the late 1760s. While neither of these frontier towns broke out in full-scale rebellion, these incidents nonetheless demonstrate the simmering tension between Indian peasants and Spanish and mestizo largeholders.[47] In Xichú, this tension manifested itself through a religio-political resistance to colonial authorities. An Indian alternative cult there had thrived in opposition to a Franciscan-led mission at least since the 1730s. A mystic named Francisco Andrés—likely Otomí—first came before the Inquisition in 1734 for consuming peyote with a group of women.[48] These women, it was later alleged, treated Andrés like a backlands saint: they attended his celebrations of Mass, participated in his tortilla Eucharist, and drank his bathwater.

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[45] Cruz, *Chichimecas, misioneros, soldados y terratenientes*, 134–135.
[46] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 91–93.
[47] Likely the only reason the Xichú incident attracted outside attention at all, and thus a place in the colonial record, was coincidence: the Bajío erupted in riots in the aftermath of the Jesuit expulsion in 1767, and authorities were quick to quell any incipient uprisings nearby, exaggerated or not.
[48] Peyote is a small cactus that, when consumed, has a hallucinogenic effect. It is highly prized by the Huichol of the Sierra del Nayarit, which is the only Indian group still legally allowed to consume it; see Schaefer and Furst, *People of the Peyote*.

Over the next three decades, Andrés consolidated his authority. He was apprehended in 1738 for leading riots against large landowners, and again in 1747 for "witchcraft and disturbances." Meanwhile, local república leader Felipe González joined the resistance and filed protests against the friars, as well as their secular replacements after 1750. He, too, fought against nearby landowners. This long-simmering resistance was finally put down in the wake of the 1767 riots in the nearby Bajío, when colonial authorities were on high alert for any hint of a rebellion. When a group of Andrés's female followers "attacked" the Xichú parish priest later that year, officials quickly apprehended González and the "old Christ" Andrés fled.[49] A parallel resistance in Tolimán proved to be a much more violent affair. Otomí rioters there burned a maguey field, and during another riot demanded that a Franciscan friar "kiss the leathers" of the Indian governor. While the records do not show what happened immediately afterward, Spanish landholders torched maguey fields and homes in nearby Bernal five years later in 1774, ostensibly to retake their rightful property.[50]

Temporarily setting aside the particular nature of these acts of resistance—largely religious in Xichú versus largely agrarian in Tolimán—it must be emphasized that both pitted a poor Otomí majority against a minority of Spanish largeholders. The parish of San Juan Bautista de Xichú was overwhelmingly Otomí by 1776, due to the Otomí conquest of the region and the slow

[49] Tutino, *Making a New World*, 412–413; and Lara, *El espejo indígena*, 129–139. In the aftermath of this incident in 1769, Archbishop Lorenzana issued a general condemnation of folk religion and medicine, including "all superstitious cures and the use of peyote," Brading, *Church and State*, 163.
[50] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (II), letter from Joaquín José Guerrero et al., 18 March 1793; and ibid., rollo 24, Civiles a instancia de los yndios sirvientes en la Congregación de Bernal, sobre que los vecinos de ella pretenden correrlos de aquella congregación.

extermination of the Jonaz population.[51] So, too, the district of Tolimán, where some 375 Otomí families surrounded 70 Spanish families in 1746.[52] Dividing these two groups was the struggle over land. This was fostered as much by the Otomí communities who defended their right to communal land, as it was by the settlers who relied on Indian labor and pointed to "Indian" violence as justification for their continuing presence and privilege as soldados fronterizos.

Land Conflict and Cross-Class Negotiation at the End of the Colonial Period

But by the late eighteenth century, frontier and serrano Indian communities had begun to accommodate the Spanish and mestizo population to a certain degree. Indian leaders negotiated with Spanish elites over land. Spanish soldiers *cum* largeholders protected their Indian workers from abusive colonial officials. And priests cooperated and developed close ties with Indian elites in matters ranging from agrarian conflict to local politics. A pattern of negotiation, not resistance, was born. Nevertheless, a landowner clique continued to dominate the region. This group had a vested interest in expanding into Indian domains—or, at the very least, not losing ground to nascent Indian pueblos—and could marshal soldiers, hacienda tenants, and Querétaro political officials to support this interest. The final years of the colonial period in the Sierra Gorda were marked by an odd juxtaposition of negotiation and conflict between the Indian and non-Indian populations, mutual aid and repression.

Despite the century-long conflict with non-Indian landowners over territory, frontier and serrano populations retained an Indian identity rooted in communal land, language, religion, and a

[51] Tutino, *Making a New World*, 411–412.
[52] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 107–108.

history of service to the Crown. These besieged communities had not melted into mixed-race hacienda settlements by the end of the colonial period. A *vicario de pie fijo* still counted 14 Pame families in the town of San Miguel Concá in 1806, for instance, despite the nearby presence of both an hacienda and a presidio.[53] Many Tolimán residents still spoke Otomí exclusively into the early 1800s.[54] A regional textile economy, too, permitted Indian communities to subsist exclusively on communal land and home manufacturing, and not perform hacienda labor. During a raid on Tolimán's subject towns in 1806, for example, hacienda forces stole wool, thread, and fabric from numerous Indian homes.[55] Furthermore, many of these communities maintained distinct religious traditions from their non-Indian neighbors. In their battle with the Spanish residents of the Congregación de Bernal, a group of Indian squatters complained that it was only in Bernal, "and not in other haciendas," that they could receive instruction as neophytes in the Catholic faith. They also had "a very large cross on the tall rock of Bernal, as Catholics."[56] The nearby Indian pueblo of San Antonio Bernal—the residents of which comprised many of the congregación's squatters—maintained confraternity territory at the foot of this rock.[57] On one hand, Indian claims about Bernal's unique ability to minister to them were likely somewhat spurious. But on the other hand, the high cross and its confraternity were undoubtedly unique to the Indian community, especially as the authors felt they had to emphasize the image was, indeed, Catholic.

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[53] AHAM, 1806, caja 152, exp. 1, 26 July 1806, letter from F. Rafael Valdés to the archdiocesan cabildo.
[54] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 8, 03c-028, 6 nov. 1806, folio 66, 16 Dec. 1806.
[55] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (III).
[56] Ibid., rollo 24, Autos formados a instancia del comun y naturales de la congregación de Bernal de la jurisdicción de Cadereyta, contra el vecindario de españoles sobre pensiones, 1799.
[57] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 14, 05c139, 17 Aug. 1808, folio 23.

Perhaps most significantly, república elections in frontier communities demonstrated that power was still inherited along cacique lines. The 1787 and 1788 elections in Tolimán's jurisdiction, for instance, reveal that a few key families maintained high positions in their towns. Both "Indians and Chichimecs" in the mission of Santo Domingo de Soriano had to choose between three candidates for governor: D. Pasqual Hernandez, D. Ventura Hernandez, and D. Marcelino Baptista. D. Ventura Hernandez won, and subsequently one D. Feliz Hernandez became alcalde and one D. Thomás Hernandez became alguacil. The next year, Pasqual Hernandez was elected governor, and Gregorio Hernandez became alcalde. Other salient surnames in frontier-town elections include Santiago, Reséndiz, Martín, and Olvera.[58] It must be noted that many of these surnames are Spanish. Even as the second alguacil of the San Antonio Bernal república in 1788 was Joaquín Olvera, for example, the teniente militar y político of the nearby Congregación de Bernal in 1799 was one Ygnacio Olvera. Similar parallels can be found for the names Resendiz, Vega, and Mejía. This does not necessarily suggest a strong family link between Indian and Spanish elites. Instead, these names likely came to Indian communities via early *compadrazgo*, as Spanish settlers such as Resendiz and Olvera in Cadereyta stood as godparents for Otomí laborers in the mid-seventeenth century.[59] In this case, Spanish elites likely stood as godparents for their elite Indian counterparts, and the families on either side of the racial divide remained in power through the colonial period.

But while Indian communities retained a distinct identity, by the end of the colonial period such communities were engaging in cross-class alliances with non-Indian elites to mutual benefit.

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[58] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1785–1788: Elecciones de autoridades indígenas de Querétaro, La Cañada y otros pueblos, 1787–1788, elections held on 2 Dec. 1787 and 30 Nov. 1788.
[59] Mendoza Muñoz, *Historia eclesiástica de Cadreyta*, 38.

According to the *mestiza* plaintiff Martina Gregoria in 1800, for example, local Spaniard Antonio Navarro usurped her land by plying Tolimanejo república officials with booze and religion. Navarro first cozied up to the república by getting them drunk enough to approve the land transfer in the early 1780s. Then, in order to "butter up […] the interested parties," Navarro paid for the land by partitioning off two parcels for the Tolimanejo confraternities of the Most Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Souls of Purgatory, to which the república quickly agreed.[60] Inebriated or not, the Indian officials made a shrewd deal when they agreed to help a local Spaniard against a mestiza from another town, and received two plots of confraternity land in the process.

Frontier and serrano Indian communities more often supported and negotiated with their priests, who were newly installed in the region since its secularization in the 1770s. In 1803, for example, república officials in the ex-missions of Landa, Tancoyol, and Tilaco absolved their priest after a local interpreter alleged the cleric charged excessive fees and abused his charges. The Indian officials instead claimed the interpreter was a troublemaker, and the case was dismissed.[61] Meanwhile, an Indian squatter community in the Spanish Congregación de Bernal offers an example of clerical negotiation. This settlement had absorbed Indian migrants from surrounding pueblos since the Spanish colony was founded in the seventeenth century, but had never been incorporated as a pueblo in its own right. Nevertheless, a *de facto* pueblo had been erected there by the late eighteenth century, complete with elected república officials. Citing an uncontrolled, expanding Indian population in their midst in 1799, Spanish members of the

[60] AHEQ, Justicia, Civil, 1800, caja 3, legajo 158.
[61] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 26, Civil, Legajo, 1802: Naturales de los pueblos de Tilaco, Landa y Tancoyol, sobre derechos parroquiales, 1803.

congregación threatened to charge a rental fee to any Indian who was not directly employed on a Spanish-owned ranch, or kick them out. The Indian quasi-officials borrowed money from the parish priest of Cadereyta, Gregorio González, to file suit against the congregación in response. The case ultimately fell through, but the Indian residents of the congregación did win lower rental fees in the end. Meanwhile, González sought support from other Indian pueblos within his diocese in a separate case. The subdelegado of Cadereyta, Esteban de Villanueva, had overstepped his jurisdictional bounds into the ecclesiastical sphere. Indians from San Miguel de las Tetillas first asked González for a resident minister for their community, but when he rejected their request, they turned to Villanueva. The subdelegado complied and successfully petitioned archdiocesan authorities for a *vicario de pie fijo*, angering González. Villanueva also made enemies of military men when he refused to summon the local militia for certain duties. González responded by again funding a suit, this time submitted by other Indian residents of Tetillas against the subdelegado. Militia members, too, joined the long list of witnesses to Villanueva's bad behavior, which ranged from excessive taxation to rape. In the end, the subdelegado left his post. But so did González. "The priest was the author of everything…," Villanueva testified. "He was the prime mover behind the Indians' complaints, like he was in the one with the Congregación de Bernal […] all of this was instigated by the priest for the wealth the Indians offer him."[62] Notwithstanding González's failure to win his proxy campaigns, his cooperation with Indian officials in the region represented a détente between frontier Indian communities and an encroaching Spanish population. Such communities were no longer isolated

[62] Ibid., Sierra Gorda: Auxilio de tropa para la publicación de bandos, 1802; ibid., Civil, Legajo 1806: Cadereita: Naturales de S. Miguel de las Tetillas, sobre abusos del subdelegado E. Villanueva, 1804–1809; ibid., rollos 26–27, Civil, Legajo 1806: Cadereyta: San Miguel de las Tetillas (II); ibid., rollo 27, Civil, Legajo 1806: Cadereita: San Miguel de Las Tetillas (III); and ibid., Civil, Legajo 1806, Cadereita: San Miguel de Las Tetillas (IV).

holdouts stuck between the "barbarous Sierra" to the east and Spanish settlement to the west. These towns now represented a meeting ground for the two regions, marked by cross-class alliance.

But there were still other segments of the frontier Spanish community who had a vested interest in the Indian land and labor permitted by the "conquest" *modus vivendi*. This community was erected on the basis of frontier defense and enjoyed a relatively free hand when dealing with the local Indian population. Non-Indian haciendas and ranches continued to justify military intervention in Indian pueblos as pacification or punitive campaigns, and imprisonment of "troublesome" Indian leaders and the destruction of settlements was commonplace. As we have seen, Indian towns were making gains in the region in terms of support from local priests and land. In the final years of the colonial period, these gains sparked a backlash designed to suppress the frontier Indian population and return it to its clearly demarcated, lesser place on the racial spectrum. Meanwhile, Indian pueblos still defended their land as the reward for their service to the Crown. In the final days of the three-hundred-year-old colony, the non-Indian and Indian ancestors of the conquistadors continued to wrestle over their inheritance.

Land conflict was a long-running issue in the jurisdiction of Tolimán. Recall that Indian groups there had filed complaints and violently opposed Spanish settlement from the southwest since at least 1641. There were likely more incidents than the two cited above that have escaped the documentary record. This battle continued in 1793, when Otomí again destroyed boundary markers for the haciendas of Juchitlán, Tequisquiapan, and Capulín and threatened hacienda

workers with stones "and other arms" to stay away from the contested territory.[63] Furthermore, claimed the hacendados in a complaint before the Real Audiencia, the Indians of Tolimán, San Pablo, and San Antonio Bernal had convened in secret to organize their defense and publicly threatened to riot. While there is no record of the Real Audiencia's judgment in this case or the hacendados' response, the situation remained tense in the region. The Tolimán towns, through their representative Pablo Ramón de Vega, later requested their lands be re-measured.[64] The viceroy acceded to the measurement in March 1805. According to later testimony from a Tolimán resident, the town governor then urged them to take back land that had been claimed by a number of nearby haciendas, claiming the viceroy commanded it. We do not know when this reclamation occurred, nor if his misinterpretation of the viceroy's response was willful or accidental. But, at any rate, hacienda forces soon struck back. The *teniente de corregidor* of Tolimanejo called in nearly 200 soldiers during Semana Santa in April 1806. He claimed the Indian cofrades' performance of the execution of Christ led to a riot, and his soldiers imprisoned many and scattered the remaining population to the surrounding scrubland. This may have been a targeted assault: the alcalde of Tolimán was captured and subsequently remained in prison nearly seven months.[65]

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[63] Ibid., rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (II), Joaquin José Guerrero to Real Audiencia, 18 March 1793.

[64] Tolimán comprised the towns of San Pedro Tolimán, San Antonio Bernal, San Pablo, San Miguelito, and San Francisco Tolimanejo.

[65] The legal case between the five towns of Tolimán's jurisdiction and the nearby haciendas discussed here and in the three subsequent paragraphs is compiled from a number of different expedientes: Ibid., Sobre tierras de haciendas invadidas por indígenas de San Pedro Tolimán (San Luis de la Paz), 1793–1806; ibid., Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (II); ibid., Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (III); ibid., rollo 27, Civil, Legajo 1806: Tierras de haciendas con los naturales de San Pedro Tolimán y otros pueblos, 1806–1827. The remainder of the case can be found in the AHBNAH, but at this point I traveled to Querétaro to find the original expedientes. There, the case continues in AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 8, 03c-028, 6 nov. 1806; and ibid., caja 9, 05c104bis, 14 Jan. 1807.

Meanwhile, the Indians' land-measurement case came to a close in the haciendas' favor on 25 June 1806. That night, the administrator of Juchitlán, Pedro Sierra, organized a force of more than 100 men: some 25 armed soldiers and more than 80 hacienda workers and renters. The subsequent assault proved to be the first episode in a large-scale campaign to subdue the Indian population of Tolimán's jurisdiction. This group invaded San Francisco Tolimanejo around midnight on 25 June and, guided by the town fiscal and an ex-alcalde, raided Indians' homes and carted off 24 to the hacienda prison. Two days later, a party of hacienda cowboys rode to San Miguelito and lassoed 14 Indians before the rest dispersed. The party then traveled to the much larger San Pedro Tolimán, where they set up an ambush outside the town. Sierra sent a messenger to the governor, claiming the corregidor of Querétaro was waiting to meet with him. The governor came out to meet the party accompanied by three other república officials, and all were captured. On their way back to the Juchitlán prison, the party again stopped at San Miguelito and captured the alcalde. Over all, these raids were designed to frighten and subdue these Indian communities and remove their leadership. Hacienda forces captured and imprisoned some 45 Indians total. They beat others and left them to die from their wounds. Four pregnant women miscarried as a result of the fright and flight to the hills (their fetuses were later dug up and examined as evidence).[66] And Sierra installed sympathetic Indian officials, such as the traitorous Tolimanejo fiscal, in place of the captured leaders.

[66] Two Querétaro surgeons—D. Juan Jose Sanchez and D. Ignacio Montañes, approved by the Real Tribunal de Protomedicato—reviewed the sketched skeletal evidence, and confirmed that the bones came from either miscarried infants, or newborns. Furthermore, they confirmed that the bones that were physically brought to Querétaro came from one body; AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 8, 03c-028, 6 Nov. 1806, folios 119–121, testimony given 26 Dec. 1806.

After another Tolimán representative filed suit against the raiding party, the Juzgado de Querétaro prohibited the district's residents from contributing funds to the case, and Pedro Sierra gathered another company of soldiers. Sierra set out with the Querétaro corregidor, an auxiliary military force under a local veteran, another hacienda party, and the imprisoned governor of Tolimán and executed a similar treatment in the remaining two Tolimán towns of San Antonio Bernal and San Pablo. In San Antonio Bernal, the troops razed an orchard and cornfield, some 19 houses, and two domed chapels. They burned 22 homes and destroyed another chapel by hand in San Pablo. Four men and women died in the process. The corregidor then had the Tolimán governor install new república officials in Bernal and San Pablo. Sierra also returned to San Miguelito and robbed livestock from the alcalde, then made his way to the now-leaderless San Pedro Tolimán and razed a number of Indian homes.

Outgunned, the Indian communities took a defensive stance and continued to seek justice through the Real Audiencia while they rid their communities of the new república officials. The combined five Tolimán towns hired a legal representative with some Querétaro connections to oppose the hacendados' political cronies, which included scribes, the corregidor, and the first alcalde of Querétaro. This representative painted a picture of Indian helplessness under the new república officials, who "capture and cruelly whip those are involved in the civil case for pueblo land."[67]

But, meanwhile, the actual situation in Tolimán was slightly different. According to numerous reports from these new officials, the remaining Tolimán population—mostly under female

[67] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (III), Joaquin Pérez Gavilan to Real Audiencia, s/f.

leadership—made their life miserable. The Querétaro corregidor had released many of the female prisoners after the first raid, claiming they made good messengers to reach the Indian population that had escaped capture and scattered into the hills. But it was likely these women who subsequently led the resistance to the hacendado offensive. After one república replacement fled his post, he explained that the ex-alcalde had gathered together a crowd of old república officials, some men, and "many women of the town." "The most brazen woman" snatched the ceremonial staff of office from the new official while her husband came from behind and grabbed his arms.[68] Later, when a military officer arrived at Pablo Ramón de Vega's property in 1807, a group of eight women armed with sticks—one of whom was de Vega's wife—came out to meet the officer and intimidated him into leaving. When the officer returned a few weeks later to arrest de Vega's son-in-law, the same women returned armed with rocks. De Vega's wife and another woman were subsequently arrested.[69]

Nevertheless, the aggrieved Otomí communities won little recompense. Despite months of imprisonment for some; the loss of homes, chapels, and orchards for many; and a sympathetic Real Audiencia, justice would elude Tolimán. The Real Audiencia ordered the Indian prisoners released and the illegitimate república officials formally deposed, but the land remained hacienda property. This ruling was reaffirmed two years later in 1808, after a number of Tolimán residents had drifted back onto hacienda property and were, again, pushed back.[70] Furthermore, the Juchitlán administrator Pedro Sierra remained free. The Mexico City body initially ordered

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[68] Ibid., Joseph Antonio Vásquez to Querétaro interim corregidor José Ygnacio Villaseñor Cervantes, 19 Sept. 1806.
[69] Ibid., rollo 24, Civil, Legajo 1795–1799: Congregación de Bernal (Cadereita) (II), 1807, Los españoles de la congregación de Bernal contra los naturales de S. Antonio Bernal sobre tierras, report from Ygnacio Olvera, 27 June 1807; and ibid., 3 July 1807.
[70] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 14, 05c139, 17 Aug. 1808.

Sierra's arrest and imprisonment, but its reach did not extend into the Sierra Gorda. The hacendados' lawyer argued that Sierra was needed on the property, and his sentence was commuted. A group of Tolimán residents complained about this punishment, but the expediente ends without resolution.

As this case and others demonstrate, both continuity and change marked cross-class relations in the Sierra Gorda at the turn of the nineteenth century. First, continuity, in the sense that an enduring conquest mentality in the region led to broad-based racial conflict. Hacienda forces, for their part, drew on an extensive cross-class network that stretched from the Sierra frontier to the city of Querétaro. The raiding parties themselves were comprised of military officers from the Congregación de Bernal, Querétaro city officials, and the tenants and workers of multiple haciendas and ranches in the frontier region. As the Tolimán representative complained to the Real Audiencia, what can be done with Pedro Sierra, the administrator of Juchitlán, "if with his power all the Spaniards, the wealthy, and other castes of the corregimiento protect him, all the way to the corregidor himself?"[71] Moreover, this was clearly a group that had long been accustomed to imposing its rule on what it perceived as a semi-barbarous mountain population. Each hacienda was equipped with a prison—the one in Juchitlán apparently housed nearly 50 people—even though this was technically a fineable offense.[72] Prisoners were lassoed and dragged back from raids with collars.[73] Racial lines were clearly drawn. One mestizo resident of Tolimanejo testified that he had considered fleeing to the hills with the Indians the day after the

[71] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (III), Joaquin Pérez Gavilan to Real Audiencia, s/f.
[72] The owner of the Hacienda de Concá was fined 200 pesos in 1806 for having a prison in his home; ibid., rollo 27, Civil, Legajo 1806: Cadereyta: San Miguel de las Tetillas (II).
[73] Ibid., Tierras de haciendas con los naturales de San Pedro Tolimán y otros pueblos, 1806–1827.

raid. As he explained, he was afraid that "those of his class would enlist him to help them against the Indians because, as the hacienda forces said that the Indians wanted to riot, it was possible they would try to raise forces against them."[74]

Indian officials held a similar, opposing worldview. They, too, drew on a history of conquest to justify their claims to land, as de Vega explained at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, they denigrated their opponents in racial terms. They were "of the same house, hacienda peons and renters, and untrustworthy, as they were mulattoes and our archenemies, and […] their caste insists on doing us harm…"[75] And they also had strong political and religious links with other Indian communities along the frontier. The residents of San Antonio Bernal easily transplanted themselves into the squatter community outside the Congregación de Bernal, and the communities shared a common cult.

But more importantly, cross-class relations were also beginning to change by the end of the colonial period. Indian frontier communities had developed ties to local power players. Toward the end of Tolimán's legal case against its neighboring haciendas, the Indian representative Pablo Ramón de Vega sought the aid of his priest. "Being very important to us that our priest of San Pedro Tolimán gives his testimony [*informe de ruego*]," de Vega explained in a letter to the Real Audiencia, "I ask you to send a dispatch to said priest in order that he testify about these particular events." The priest Juan Baptista de la Pedrueza was duly notified, and wrote a statement affirming precisely what de Vega said he would: namely, the cleric did not know anything about an Indian riot in Tolimán that would justify such an extensive series of raids.

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[74] Ibid.
[75] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 14, 05c139, 17 Aug. 1808, folios 22–25.

Moreover, he added, the town governor did not present any resistance whatsoever to the arresting party.[76] Perhaps no other statement better summarizes the significance of this change in the Indians' fortune, than that of the Bernal squatters' legal representative before the Real Audiencia. Earlier in the eighteenth century, he explained, the occupying Indians did not have the resources to "travel to a place that had a patron who, informed of the audacity of their opponents, would counsel them in what they should do." At the time, they were thus reduced to the "most deplorable state."[77] But now, on the eve of colonial collapse, these Indian frontier communities were cementing the bonds with those patrons who would aid them in the construction of the new Mexican state.

Conclusion

Querétaro, the gateway to the Bajío, stood out from the rest of the region as a bastion of Indian wealth and power long into the colonial period. Africans, Spaniards, Indians, and all combinations thereof jostled together in mining centers such as Zacatecas and Guanajuato. Meanwhile, Otomí settlers established massive ranches in the Querétaro lowlands. Even more enduring were the Catholic foundations these settlers established both there and in the highlands: the large convents, the confraternities, the tiny domed chapels and crosses. Religious records are regrettably limited in this region—especially as compared with Nayarit—but the brief insights we have show a thriving Catholic cult in the Sierra Gorda Queretana, and relatively strong relationships between priests and parishioners.

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[76] Ibid., caja 8, 03c-028, 6 Nov. 1806, folios 122–126.
[77] AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 24, Civil, Legajo 1795–1799: Sobre tierras de la congregación de Bernal (Cadereyta), con los indios gañanes de ellas.

But despite this auspicious beginning, these Otomí "allies" were soon perceived as obstacles to large-scale haciendas and ranches owned by Europeans and worked by mestizo hands and tenants. This encroaching population treated Otomí groups in the same fashion as they treated those other highland groups the Otomí had helped pacify. Essentially, the Otomí's very distinction as an Indian group permitted non-Indian groups to more easily aggregate them into a mass of unruly serranos that could be forcefully repressed. But just as the highlands Indian population was not monolithic, neither were their new, non-Indian neighbors. Brutal military campaigns by soldier-settlers in the early to mid eighteenth century soon paved the way for certain immigrants to establish large landholdings while others were edged out. Some soldiers *cum* ranchers relied more heavily on Otomí labor than others, and had to accommodate their needs. Priests saw more value in maintaining good relations with Indian leaders than with hacendados—whether because they were themselves rival hacendados, as we shall see, or because helping to establish a new Indian pueblo would bring in higher obventions. Beginning in the late colonial period and continuing into postcolonial Mexico, priests, soldiers, and caciques would establish tighter links to reshape the Sierra Gorda Queretana after its conquest.

CHAPTER 6

Politics, Religion, and Rebellion in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro, 1800–1867

Introduction

In 1853, the parish priest of Cadereyta accused his assistant minister, Rafael Aguilar, of aiding Tomás Mejía when that young military officer publicly advocated a coup d'état. Aguilar signed Mejía's declaration, alleged the priest, and invited the commander and his subordinates into the parsonage for a meal. Although Aguilar's signature did indeed appear on the town council's letter of support for Mejía, the assistant minister denied all accusations. But then he hedged. "[E]ven supposing they had come to my house," Aguilar explained, "and I had offered them something to eat, there would be nothing strange in that. Is it possible [the parish priest] is not aware that the *jefe principal* of this political movement, as well as many of the officials who accompany Sr. Mejía, are closely related to me?"[1]

In this single statement, Aguilar encapsulated the basis of popular Conservative revolt in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro. From 1848 to 1867, Tomás Mejía and numerous subordinates—including most notably his second, Rafael Olvera—led serrano uprisings and distant campaigns as one of the most important units of the Conservative forces during the Reform period. Indeed, mid-century rebellion was born of a defense of the Church and military. For Mejía, Olvera, and their numerous fighters, this was a defense of their own institutions. Over the course of the early

[1] AHAM, 1853, caja 88, exp. 33.

postcolonial period, a number of leading serrano families gained land and power at the expense of the disintegrating haciendas. They legitimized that power by attaining military rank and sending family members to join the clergy. Furthermore, this growing network of clerics and soldiers had established vertical ties within serrano communities by the late 1840s and 1850s by lending money, erecting schools, and aiding in violent protest against aggressive state intervention in the region. Rather than a defensive reaction to outside intervention in local affairs, as was the case in Nayarit, popular Conservatism in the Sierra Gorda was much more an offensive action to protect a recently developed status quo.

In this chapter, I will detail the development of that clerical and military society within the Sierra Gorda in four thematically grouped sections. The first section describes changing land tenure in the region. Once formidable institutions, many serrano haciendas suffered extensive damage due to insurgent raids during the independence movement. The subsequent loss of income, coupled with creditors' demands for debt repayment amid the political instability of the postcolonial period, led to these haciendas' fracture. Indian pueblos and other municipalities, too, shed land in the republican era. Taking advantage of this real estate boom, a new rancher class arose in this period composed of priests, soldiers, and leaders within Indian communities.

The second and third sections parallel the first, examining how this new rancher class developed and maintained social dominance in the Sierra Gorda. I focus on the Mejía and Olvera families here, given both extant evidence and the important role these two families played during the Reform period. And while these families maintained law and order in the region, the clergy aided serrano communities in other ways. By mid century, a mutually beneficial exchange marked the

relationship between priests and parishioners. Parishioners largely allowed priests to control Church funds such as confraternities. In exchange, priests often lent money, built schools, and participated in local politics.

The fourth section details the changing nature of Sierra Gorda-based rebellion in the 1830s–60s. In early uprisings, ranchers and small-scale growers rejected state intervention in tobacco farming. While caciques such as Cristóbal Mejía helped to link these uprisings with national rebellions, serrano fighters' aims were nevertheless local in scope. But beginning in the 1840s and 50s, uprisings looked outward to reforms at the national level. The career of Tomás Mejía demonstrates this well as he transformed from the mere scion of a local strongman in the 1840s to a national military leader by the next decade.

Overall, this chapter builds upon the work of numerous scholars who have begun to examine land tenure and local politics in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro. Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, for example, examines the ebb and flow of large-scale landholding in her study of hacendados and ranchers in Querétaro.[2] She rightly points to an "agrarian decompression" in the early postcolonial period, as haciendas split into multiple ranches among a diverse crowd of smallholders. Moreover, she identifies a few key beneficiaries of this "rancherization" in the highlands, such as the Olvera, Vega, and Reséndiz families. My own research in the notarial records of Jalpan bears this out. But while García Ugarte argues that this decompression did not come to the Sierra Gorda until a state-mandated land redistribution the late 1840s, I contend it began in earnest at least a decade earlier. The Olveras bought up communal Indian land in the

[2] García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 69–95; and *Hacendados y rancheros queretanos*.

1830s, for instance, and this explains in part how that family was poised to take advantage of the redistribution in the next decade.

Next, scholars such as Brian Hamnett and Fernando Díaz Ramírez have detailed well Tomás Mejía's military biography.[3] And Hamnett, for instance, does well to point out that Mejía was as much grounded in Sierra Gorda communities and culture as he was a national figure. Moreover, Hamnett problematizes the notion that these serrano communities were necessarily "Indian" by the 1850s and 60s, or that Mejía identified with any "Indian" causes. Indeed, Mejía behaved in an almost anti-Indian manner, putting down a "caste war" in the late 1840s and later using the phrase to denigrate his Liberal opponents in the 1850s.[4] But this chapter and the preceding one deepen this excellent base of research by examining Church and land records in the nineteenth century, thus providing further economic and social context to explain not just Mejía's rise, but also those of his followers and subordinates.

Most recently, James Cypher has problematized the notion that the Sierra Gorda was a Conservative redoubt, pointing instead to anticlericalism and support for Liberal forces in key communities. Instead of supporting a coherent Conservative ideology, Cypher has found many serrano communities were ambivalent toward national politics as "[r]ebel social programs and alliances shifted over time, the republican promise of land and autonomy could not hold, and

[3] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives"; Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader"; and Díaz, *La vida heroica*.
[4] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 196.

communities in the Sierra reconstituted their identities based on historical meanings and values of ethnicity and nationalism."[5]

But I argue that, while Cypher admirably draws on civil and Church archives across a broad area, it is precisely this geographical imprecision that leads him to this conclusion. The Sierra Gorda is a broad territory—encompassing four states—with diverse natural resources, leading to different development and population over time. The region surrounding Xichú in present-day Guanajuato, for instance, was opened to mining early in the sixteenth century. This had an enormous impact on not only the region's economic development, but its social development, as well. While the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro remained largely impoverished mission territory until the eighteenth century, for example, Xichú was secularized in the sixteenth and became home to a wealthy parish.[6] As Matthew Butler points out for Michoacán in the same period, this unequal economic development early on could lead to much different religious cultures in later centuries. The same is true for the Sierra Gorda, where regions such as Xichú were largely ambivalent or hostile to Mejía's Conservative movement, but the Sierra Queretana broadly supported him and his subordinates.[7]

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[5] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 10.
[6] Lara, *El cristo viejo de Xichú*, 145.
[7] Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity*, 26–27. Importantly, Butler argues that the presence of mines and an early secularization in Michoacán's north led to a more clerical region in the twentieth century. In southern Michoacán, the lingering presence of independent Indian communities and haciendas owned by regular orders retarded this clerical development. As indicated here, the opposite seems to be true for the Sierra Gorda, where the long-secularized Xichú region actively resisted Mejía and later the Second Empire. But it is essential to remember that nineteenth-century Conservatism did not transition directly to Catholic rebellion in the twentieth. The latter operated in an altogether different Church-State context and with different motives than its predecessor, for instance. Indeed, Xichú seems to have been a cristero haven in the 1920s; Meyer, *La cristiada, vol. I*, 24, 142, 237.

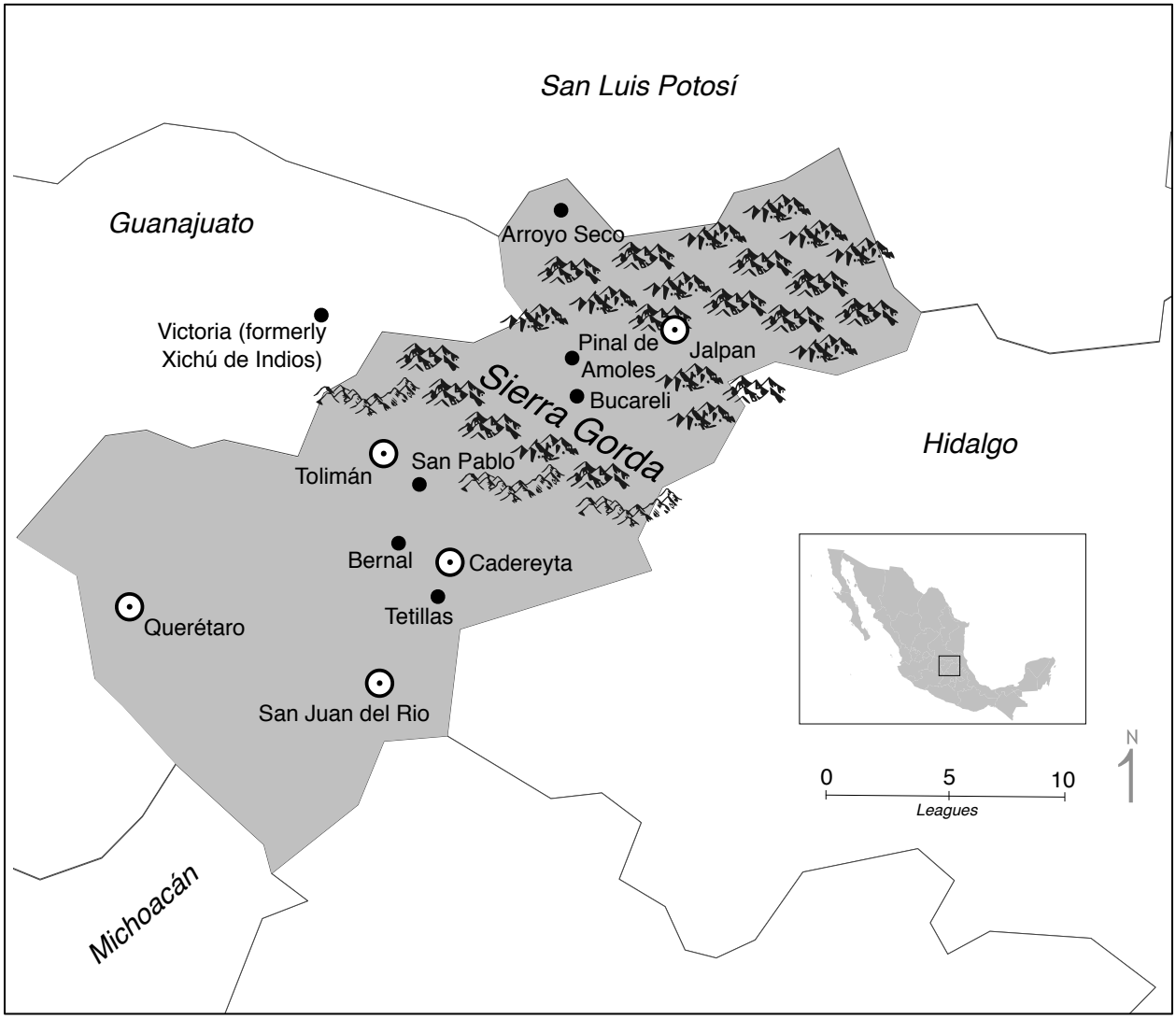

Figure 9: Republican-Era Querétaro

Independence, the Dissolution of the Hacienda, and Changing Land Tenure, 1810–1860

This section details the gradual deconcentration of land over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. At first, little changed as the late-colonial violence between hacienda partisans and Indian communities along the frontier transformed into warfare after the outbreak of the insurgency in 1810. But the fighting took a severe financial toll on the great estates.

Following independence, the already weakened haciendas came under greater strain as creditors demanded money in an unstable political environment, and the estates began a long process of land attrition. Meanwhile, the Querétaro state government mandated that serrano Indian pueblos sell off communal land, and many town leaders complied. The rancher class flourished in this environment as priests, soldiers, and leading Indian families expanded their holdings. The cliques that developed, in fact, grew powerful enough to challenge the Mexican state in numerous rebellions, and the government's attempts to re-establish military outposts in the Sierra Gorda met with failure at mid century. The division of land in this region, far from sparking rebellion for its own sake, instead strengthened regional caciques who would later rebel for other reasons during the Reform period.

In the Sierra Gorda, the early nineteenth-century battles between frontier hacienda forces and indigenous communities transitioned directly into guerrilla warfare during the independence period. Hacienda owners and their workers and renters along the frontier fought for the royalist cause. Pedro Sierra, the administrator of the Tolimán-area haciendas who raided indigenous communities in 1806, for example, became a royalist officer in the Sierra Gorda forces in the next decade.[8] Once released from the normal strictures of colonial law, Sierra began a terror campaign in local indigenous towns. Royalist forces attacked and nearly destroyed the town of San Miguel de las Tetillas, mutilated the survivors as a warning, and exacted tribute on them to supply the royalist cause. Sierra maintained this tribute flow by threatening to execute the survivors, beginning with the alcalde and the república members. Nevertheless, this move apparently did little to dampen Tetillas's fury. Demonstrating their continuing relationship with

[8] For more discussion of Pedro Sierra and these raids, see chapter 5.

local clergy, town residents gave money to Br. José María Gutiérrez to form and lead two insurgent squadrons in 1813. Many other frontier and serrano communities contributed fighters to the insurgency and kept it alive through the first half of the 1810s. In the Tolimán district, república leaders supported the movement led by Julián Villagrán and his son from their base in Huichapan.[9] Guerrillas launched attacks from Pinal de Amoles, later Tomás Mejía's base, among other sites.[10] Insurgents in this region occupied themselves with raiding commercial routes, but conflict continued to focus on land along the frontier.[11] Multiple haciendas in the region suffered grave damage from insurgent attacks. Rather than lose yet more troops to inevitable raids on the Hacienda de Buena Esperanza in 1814, for instance, Pedro Sierra suggested its worried owner would be better off storing all his grain and daily transporting all collected money to the city of Querétaro.[12] On the insurgents' side, San Miguelito, the town harassed and partially torched by Sierra's forces in 1806, was completely razed in 1811.[13]

Meanwhile, despite staging the insurrection's seminal conspiracy, lowlands Querétaro remained royalist and thrived during the independence period. Although Miguel Hidalgo and other creole patriots first schemed to achieve autonomy for New Spain while in Querétaro, the city was a royalist haven. The besieged middle class from the Tolimán district fled to the urban hub early in the war, such as the shopkeeper Ygnacio Aguiluz and his wife in 1811.[14] Most importantly, these refugees brought along their wealth. An agent of the Hacienda de Concá in Jalpan took a "considerable amount of silver … and other goods" in 1812, for instance—the recovery of which

[9] Somohano, "Indios en el Corregimiento de Querétaro," 9–12.
[10] Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 127.
[11] For attacks on commercial routes, see AHPJQ, Bicentenario, caja 5, 06c130, 2 Nov. 1811.
[12] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 120–121.
[13] Somohano Martínez, "Indios en el Corregimiento de Querétaro," 11.
[14] AHPJQ, Bicentenario, caja 5, 06c124, 16 Oct. 1811.

was still being sought in 1848.[15] While insurgents plagued the surrounding Sierra Gorda and the Bajío, royalist efforts to secure at least limited commercial routes around Querétaro made that city "one of the wealthiest … of New Spain."[16] The city did so well, in fact, that it faced a bitter challenge from the postcolonial government in 1824. In that year, the federalist congress initially refused statehood for Querétaro as it "had not fought for the freedom of Mexico." Indeed, Querétaro's deserved reputation as a "bastion of conservatism" would long make the state and city a target of Liberal, federalist reforms, which only reinforced the state's tendency to support a centralist government in the years to come.[17]

But if the Sierra Gorda of the late colonial period had been characterized by combat between large haciendas and small pueblos, between a mixed-race immigrant population and indigenous communities, in the postcolonial period the economic and social landscape changed dramatically. Haciendas fractured from the economic toll of insurgent raids and under the threat of liberal economic policies to come. Other landowners, from soldiers to caciques to priests, purchased fragments of the estates and rose to prominence. Surviving military presidios transformed into pueblos. And both the state and central government attempted to intervene in the region in order to bring the Sierra Gorda under closer control by redistributing land and establishing yet more military colonies.

First, the large haciendas of both the lowlands and highlands began to fragment in the wake of independence. Large landowners simply found themselves without sufficient capital to maintain

[15] AHEQ, Justicia, caja 95, carpeta 1840, L123C2, folio s/n, D. Manuel Mar grants power of attorney to D. Pablo Martinez Rios, 17 Nov. 1848.
[16] Hamnett, "Royalist Counterinsurgency," 41.
[17] García, *Hacendados y rancheros queretanos*, 14, 77–78.

such extensive territory, due to both insurgent depredations and the economically liberal strategies of the Querétaro state. In the case of the latter, García Ugarte argues that two policies in particular spelled the end of the great estate. First, in 1823 the legislature prohibited entail, virtually guaranteeing that haciendas would be split upon the owner's death. Second, merely the threat of ecclesiastical nationalization policies in 1833 triggered a rush on hacienda liens. Those clerics and religious institutions that had subsisted for centuries from the interest on a lien, suddenly demanded fulfillment of that debt in order to prevent the state from expropriating it.[18] These demands for liquid capital, coming at a time when haciendas were still rebuilding after the destruction of 1810–1821, crippled large landholders. The concentrated land now diffused among its numerous beneficiaries: inheritors, renters, and estate executors, for example. Priests, often acting as executors, enlarged their already substantial holdings in this period.[19] This process continued to mid century in the lowlands. Between 1848 and 1876—the years for which aggregate data is available—there were five fewer haciendas and 41 more ranches in the valleys of western Querétaro.[20]

Meanwhile in the highlands, concentrated land of all origins—from haciendas to municipalities to public lands—began to splinter. Indian communal land went on the market first. Ostensibly in accord with an 1830 state decree, both groups of Indians and Indian representatives acting on

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[18] García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 71–74.
[19] Br. D. Francisco Jara, presbyter of the Diocese of Michoacán, served as the estate executor responsible for dividing the Hacienda de Jalpa from the Hacienda del Potrero in 1840, for instance; AHEQ, Justicia, caja 95, carpeta 1840, L123C2, 11 April 1840. Prior to independence, many priests were already well-established hacendados. Tolimán priest Br. D. Juan Bautista de la Pedrueza died in 1807, leaving behind the haciendas of Santo Tomas de la Estancia and San Nicolas Totolapa, which he rented out; AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 10, 07cri094, 6 Feb. 1807, folio 24.
[20] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 158–159.

behalf of the community sold off dozens of municipal plots to various buyers.[21] Ecclesiastics such as the parish priest of Jalpan, as well as town officials and at least one large landholder bought this land in sales that continued through 1850.[22] Members of numerous leading Indian families, such as the Olvera and Vega clans, also bought up the land in bulk.[23] These leading families further benefited from municipal land redistribution in the mid 1840s. In response to periodic uprisings in the Sierra, state authorities adjudicated municipal property to smallholders in order to forestall further rebellion. Land pertaining to Indian pueblos and the aging serrano haciendas was also caught up in this massive sale. While all potential rebels were the intended buyers in this land redistribution, a few leading families had the resources to take the lion's share—namely, those families that had already begun to accumulate territory earlier in the decade.[24] Highland haciendas finally met the same fate as their lowland counterparts and were divided among their beneficiaries beginning in the 1850s. Overall, in the entire period from 1830–1860, the "social diversity" of the Sierra's smallholder class had changed dramatically with the introduction of new landowners: "military officers, soldiers, Indians from the Sierra Gorda, rural workers from the valleys, down-on-their-luck hacendados, and also some denouncers of hidden property."[25]

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[21] In one sale between an Indian regidor and priest Carlos Francisco Ortega in Landa in 1836, the notary mentions the purchase is made "in view of the decree of 8 Oct. 1830 of the Congress of the aforementioned Department of Querétaro, then a state, which emanated from the General Law of 24 Feb. 1822, in force to this date"; AHEQ, Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, 1 Nov. 1836.
[22] Br. D. Pablo Espinosa was the parish priest of Jalpan in the late 1830s; ibid., 3 Nov. 1837; and ibid., 22 Feb. 1838.
[23] See Appendix 2.
[24] García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 85–86, 90.
[25] Ibid., 85.

Even as much corporate land was alienated to individual owners in the first half of the nineteenth century, new pueblos were formed from the remnants of the colonial-era presidios and haciendas. Regarding presidios, the surviving military settlements established roots in the postcolonial Sierra Gorda. In doing so, the military's autocratic reign over Indian communities in the mid eighteenth century gradually gave way to a more peaceful coexistence through the first half of the nineteenth. Soldiers stationed in the presidios remained in the region as those military settlements became pueblos. Arroyo Seco converted to a pueblo in the late 1820s, for example, and retired soldiers and military officers stayed on.[26] Families such as the Guillen, who were commanders and lieutenants in the 1820s, became magistrates in the 1830s.[27] San José Vizarrón and San Sebastián Bernal, too, became pueblos in 1847. Other new pueblos took the necessary start-up land and population from decadent haciendas. Boyé, for instance, was formed in 1847 largely from land that had belonged to the hacienda San Rafael de Agua de Patos in the jurisdiction of Cadereyta.[28]

Beyond redistributing land in the Sierra by sale or fiat, the state attempted to settle the region with a new population intended to discourage rebellion. The first governor of Querétaro, José María Diez Marina, in the 1820s exempted all migrants from the tithe and alcabala upon their move to Jalpan.[29] Although some lowland workers did head into the hills, this measure proved ineffective to forestall rebellion. In the 1830s and 40s, a series of uprisings convinced Mexican authorities that the Sierra was too near the nation's capital, and too dangerous, to allow it to

[26] AHEQ Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio 37, 13 Dec. 1833.
[27] Ibid., folio s/n, March 1826; and ibid., folio s/n, Nov. 1833.
[28] García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 89.
[29] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 128.

remain outside the government's direct control. As the state governor explained in a desperate letter to Anastasio Bustamante in 1832,

> "The prefect of the district of San Pedro Tolimán in notes from 19 and 20 July informed me that it had come to his attention that all the pueblos of the Sierra that border Querétaro and San Luis Potosí had pronounced for the new Plan de Veracruz, having done the same the residents of Sótano and Arroyo Seco, which pertain to the district of Jalpan: the gang of one Mejía is growing larger every day and his force is terrible not only for its number, but because it is composed of Indians and corrupt outlaws."[30]

Bustamante subsequently sent a division to Querétaro to suppress the threat of the incipient coup, which nevertheless successfully ousted the president. In light of this and other threats, central authorities' ultimate solution was to forcefully colonize the zone and remove it from Querétaro's jurisdiction. Pres. Mariano Arista established multiple colonies in 1851, hoping that they would flourish "in a virgin country, full of riches, from which the idea of revolution would disappear…"[31] Belying the notion of a virgin territory, many of these military colonies were founded upon ranches and moribund haciendas. The first colony was established on land that had once formed La Gata ranch in Jalpan in 1851.[32] The haciendas Amoladeras and Albercas, which in 1836 had successfully fought off land usurpation from the ex-presidio Arroyo Seco, in 1851 would cede land to that presidio's successor colony.[33]

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[30] AHSEDENA, Operaciones militares, XI/481.3/876, letter from Gov. Manuel López de Ecala to Anastasio Bustamante, 21 July 1832.
[31] Vázquez, "Espacio social y crisis política," 55–56.
[32] Díaz, *La vida heroica de Tomás Mejía*, 23.
[33] AHEQ Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio 75, 24 Feb. 1836; and García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 89.

But this and other attempts to re-militarize the zone met with failure. Despite Arista's ambition, his new military colonies would not last beyond his presidency. They were costly—the 84,000 pesos required to subsidize soldiers and more than one thousand other residents were supposed to come from an indemnity the U.S. owed Mexico after the war—and plagued with disease and land disputes. Santa Anna attempted to revive this military control of the Sierra after he took power in 1853, and he designated the region the Territory of the Sierra Gorda and placed it under the direct authority of the central government. This territory primarily fell within Guanajuato, not Querétaro, as it was the Xichú region that had most recently rebelled. But if Santa Anna's hope was to prevent the rebellious zone from threatening the central government, he failed. Hacendado Vicente Vega seconded the Plan de Ayutla, which would eventually bring down Santa Anna, a year later in 1854. Although regional troops successfully defeated Vega, the Plan de Ayutla succeeded and the territory's *comandante militar*, Tomás Mejía, launched his own Sierra-based rebellion.[34]

Temporarily setting aside state military intervention, what is most remarkable about this gradual process of land division from 1830–1860—whether through hacienda, municipal, and Indian land sales or state redistribution—is that it was accomplished without much negative reaction. Indian communities willingly alienated swathes of communal property to aspirant ranchers such as priests, soldiers, and Indian elites. Even confraternity land was sold off in this period. A group of Jalpan Indian leaders sold off a few brotherhood plots in 1839 and '40 in order to fund repairs for the church, and at least three of the same leaders sold a *milpa* "of the saint" in 1848.[35] All of

[34] Vázquez, "Espacio social y crisis política," 55–59. The territory was dissolved by decree in 1857.
[35] AHEQ, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folios 55–59, 216–217, 247.

this suggests that mid-century rebellion had little to do with land. The region was certainly rife with violence and uprisings, but these primarily dealt with other matters, as discussed below. This does not suggest, of course, that land redistribution did not matter. Rather than sparking rebellion, land deconcentration allowed leading serrano families to broaden their authority and elevate caciques to regional dominance over land and military affairs.

The Consolidation of Cacique Authority, 1830–1860

As their hacendado opponents were weakened in the early nineteenth century, serrano caciques broadened their power. They achieved their ascent in two important ways. First, these cacique families legitimated an existing informal authority by attaining military and supra-pueblo political positions in the 1830s and 40s. And second, they expanded their landholdings by purchasing land from fracturing haciendas, Indian pueblos, and other serrano municipalities. Furthermore, the nature of these cacique families' rise in the Sierra Gorda led to a regional embrace of Conservatism at midcentury. By legitimating power through military service and clerical authority, as discussed in the subsequent section, these caciques supported both the military and the Church in their fight to retain traditional privilege during the Reform War.

The Mejía family offers the prime example. Although little is known of the family's origins, in the early republican period the Mejías had attained the heights of political and military power in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro. Cristóbal Mejía, the father of Tomás, ascended social ranks to

become a regional cacique by the 1830s.[36] In the absence of notarial documents from Tolimán, we do not know whether Cristóbal came from a landowning family, or whether he purchased extensive property through the 1830s Indian land sales. The name Mejía does not appear among either the Indians selling land or the ranchers purchasing it in the Jalpan notarial documents from this period. There is evidence that a young Tomás carried goods for a Spanish merchant in Jalpan, so perhaps Cristóbal had been a muleteer.[37] While this is mere speculation, such a position would explain the older Mejía's notoriety and his ability to effectively marshal rebellions across the Sierra Gorda Queretana. In addition to his involvement in an 1839–41 Sierra Gorda rebellion, Cristóbal may have been the "Mejía" named above, at the head of a gang of "Indians and corrupt outlaws" in 1832.[38] At any rate, Cristóbal Mejía operated with official military and political authority in the region from at least the 1830s to his death in 1840. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the national army and was prefect of Jalpan in the late 1830s.[39] Possessing political and military, and formal and informal, authority in the Jalpan region, Mejía was able to transcend the jurisdictional boundaries that had bedeviled his predecessors.[40]

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[36] One Vicente Mejía was robbed of 32 yards of cloth in the 1806 raid on the Tolimán-jurisdiction pueblos, but we do not know where he lived, nor whether he held any political position; AHBNAH, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 23, Civil, Legajo 1792: San Pedro Tolimán (III)," 9 July 1806.
[37] Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 14.
[38] This claim must remain speculative, however, as one José Antonio Mejía—apparently no relation—was also circulating in northeast Mexico in support of the Plan de Veracruz at this time; Fowler, *Santa Anna*, 151.
[39] Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 127.
[40] Recall, for instance, the Cadereyta subdelegado Esteban de Villanueva discussed in chapter 5, who was run out of town in the early nineteenth century after a dispute with the local militia leader.

A posthumous court case offers at least some insight into the nature of the elder Mejía's power.[41] In an otherwise unexceptional legal action regarding a stabbing death, Mejía—dead by the time the case came to court in 1841—entered the scene a number of times and demonstrated that he freely acted as peacekeeper, judge, and assassin in the region. In 1836, Mejía broke up a fight between two *rayuela* players at a Bucareli ranch.[42] In the aftermath of the scuffle, one of the fighters—the uncle of a Bucareli magistrate, also in attendance—yelled at his nephew to mind his own business, which started another fight. The magistrate stabbed his uncle in the brawl, mortally wounding him, and fled. Despite Mejía's calls to capture him, Guadalupe Reséndiz escaped, only to turn himself in a month later. The Bucareli judge, Martin Mejía, sentenced him to prison.[43] This might have been the end of the matter, but Reséndiz confronted Cristóbal Mejía two years later while on furlough from prison.[44] In an apparently unrelated action, Mejía struck Felipe Vega, Reséndiz's friend and the owner of the Bucareli ranch on which the murder had taken place. Reséndiz witnessed the public beating and approached Mejía and demanded to know why the prefect struck his friend. "It doesn't matter," Mejía replied, before pulling out a pistol and firing it point blank at Reséndiz. A misfire saved the convict's life, and he fled once again to the Jalpan hills and canyons. Mejía, meanwhile, sent a group of soldiers to assassinate Vega. Mejía's involvement in the case ended when he left the region in command of a troop of soldiers, heading for a rebellion in nearby Rioverde. In light of these brief encounters, it is clear Mejía

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[41] The information in the following paragraph comes from AHPJQ, Guadalupe Victoria, Cadereyta, 1841, "Contra Guadalupe Reséndiz por faccioso de la Rev. de la Sierra."
[42] Rayuela is played by tossing heavy discs at a remote target, akin to the bean-bag toss of the present-day Midwestern United States.
[43] While a direct family connection between Martin and Cristóbal Mejía cannot be determined, it seems likely they were related. Cristóbal's son, Tomás, was born in Bucareli; Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 127.
[44] According to Reséndiz, his jailer permitted him to occasionally leave the prison and seek his own subsistence; AHPJQ, Guadalupe Victoria, Cadereyta, 1841, folios 3–6.

exercised a broad range of authority in the region. He intervened in casual affairs to keep the peace, breaking up a fight during a party on a nearby ranch. He publicly assaulted and shot at his enemies. He could command soldiers to assassinate a landowner rival. And he could marshal troops and matériel to enter a rebellious zone at some distance from his home jurisdiction.

In his own reign in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro, Tomás Mejía both inherited some authority from his father and varied from his example.[45] Born in Bucareli in 1820, Tomás would likely have inherited his father's broad dominion over the region had he not left the Sierra in his early 20s. While his father simply used military rank to legitimize his authority in the Sierra, Tomás became a career soldier and ventured far and wide across Mexico in his military training. Despite an early job carting merchandise between Querétaro, Cadereyta, and Jalpan, Mejía made an impression on the military officer who came to Jalpan to suppress the rebellion that Cristóbal had come to support in 1839. Battalion Commander Juan Cano arrived in Jalpan in 1841, offered Tomás the rank of sub-lieutenant, and brought him back to Mexico City to enroll him in the Colegio Militar. Mejía's biographer suggests this move was done out of Cano's affinity for the young Tomás, but Hamnett points out that "re-educating" the ascendant scion of a troublesome cacique from the Sierra Gorda was on the mind of Cano's superior officer, Julián Juvera. A subsequent coup thwarted Mejía's education, but he then applied to follow Cano to Chihuahua and Nuevo México. As Juvera pointed out to Mexico City authorities, this move north "would redound to the benefit of the Department [of Querétaro], because it would put distance between this local-born officer and the place where he had been the leader of the revolution."[46] It is not

[45] The biographical information for Tomás Mejía comes from Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 127–139; and Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 11–23.
[46] Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 131. Translation is Hamnett's.

clear whether Tomás actually led the 1839–41 rebellion or not, but outside authorities clearly identified the Mejía power as hereditary. Permission granted, Mejía battled Comanches and Apaches from 1842–45. If he had not already shed any Indian identity—Mejía was widely regarded as Otomí—his experience fighting northern indigenous groups likely erased any remaining racial distinction he may have felt. In the future, he would not identify either himself or his fighters as Otomí or Indian, but would label at least some of his enemies "caste warriors."[47] Mejía achieved distinction in the U.S.-Mexican War, and ascended to commandant in 1849. He then returned home to the Sierra.

Although Mejía continued to rise in political and military rank in the Sierra Gorda like his father, his time away seems to have cost him some local status. On one hand, his efforts in suppressing the Quiroz rebellion in 1849 (to be discussed below) brought recognition from Mexico City authorities. As mentioned above, Santa Anna placed him in charge of the Territory of the Sierra Gorda in 1853, the same year Tomás took his father's post as prefect of Jalpan. This gave him command over a region much larger than Cristóbal's, including Querétaro and extending beyond into Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí. Tomás later attained the ranks of colonel and then brigadier general after defeating Vicente Vega in 1854, who seconded the Plan de Ayutla from his base in the Sierra Gorda. But on the other hand, Mejía's influence over the serrano population seems to have been somewhat more limited than that of his father. He attempted to bolster this support through local charity, asking his troops to distribute tithe seeds to Tolimán pueblos, for instance.[48] Nonetheless, local support for both the Quiroz and Vega rebellions put Mejía on the defensive and forced him to violently combat insurrection in his own region. Vega later posed

[47] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 196.
[48] Miró, *El general Rafael Olvera*, 47–48.

another, greater threat to Mejía's control of the region during the Reform War. While Mejía was fighting in San Luis Potosí in 1858, Vega had taken Jalpan. Mejía was aware of his limited reach. He warned the central government that, "without prompt and energetic action, the revolution will extend through the Sierra into the Department of Veracruz." Even worse, he continued, without the necessary government support, his troops were liable to join up with Vega—hardly a pledge of firm loyalty.[49]

If the experience of the Mejía family demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of primarily political and military dominance, the Olvera family proved that a more agrarian cacicazgo had deeper roots. Like the Mejía lineage, the colonial origins of the Olvera family are also unclear. Nevertheless, as mentioned in chapter 5, one Joaquín Olvera appeared on a república roll in 1788 in San Antonio Bernal, suggesting the family had some social prominence by then. By the 1830s, Olveras were regularly elected as town officials in Jalpan.[50] In tandem with this political preeminence, a number of Olveras established themselves as ranchers in the region, gradually buying up Indian and municipal land in the 1830s and 40s. This combination of political and agrarian dominance in the early republican era led to military might in the Reform period. Tomás Mejía relied heavily on Rafael Olvera, his second in command and the new prefect of Jalpan in 1857. When Vicente Vega overtook the region in 1858, in fact, Mejía appealed to Olvera to leave the city of Querétaro, where he had been stationed, and return to the hills due to his "ascendancy in all the villages of that area."[51] While Mejía fought in the field, Olvera primarily

[49] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 196. Translation is Hamnett's.
[50] AHEQ, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio s/n, 1835; ibid., Jan. 1840; and ibid., 1842.
[51] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 196. Translation is Hamnett's.

guarded the Sierra, relying on his extensive family to muster recruits.[52] Moreover, he continued to dominate the Sierra Gorda long after Mejía's death. Olvera maintained military authority despite never receiving an official commission in the army. In 1880, for example, he led a group of fighters from Jalpan to support Peñamiller residents in their fight against a local hacienda. When the prefect of Tolimán sent his own forces to combat Olvera, the latter complained to the state governor that federal forces were under attack in the Sierra. The Tolimán prefect, for his part, responded that Olvera's men were not "federal troops" nor were paid any official wage. Olvera had instead armed ranchers, peasants, and various other pueblo residents who subsisted on "corn and beans."[53] Olvera accumulated massive stretches of land in the years after the fall of the Second Empire, and became an important creditor in the region. Reaching the height of his power in 1883, he converted this informal, agrarian-based power into a successful bid for the state governorship, which he held until 1887.[54]

But while their respective political, military, and agrarian roots explain how Tomás Mejía and Rafael Olvera attained the power they did, it only explains in part why they supported the Conservative cause. First, Mejía's military background and the Sierra Gorda's recurring negative experiences with soldier-settlers accounts for much. As Mejía pronounced against the Ayutla government in 1855, "our efforts will save … the military, which is destroyed and annihilated; more than anything, prostituted through the admission of men from the presidios and notorious

[52] Rafael's brother, Francisco, died after a battle in 1876, and one Rosalio Olvera served as Rafael's subordinate in 1880, for example; Miró, *El general Rafael Olvera*, 47–48, 82, 98.
[53] Ibid., 96, 98.
[54] Ibid., 109–132.

bandits." Olvera, despite no military background to speak of, echoed this support of the army in his own 1857 pronouncement.[55]

Second, Catholic zeal proved a firm and lasting foundation of Mejía and Olvera's support for political Conservatism. For his part, Mejía publicly expressed his defense of the Catholic Church. In the same 1855 pronouncement mentioned above, he explained that his efforts would also save "the clergy, who today do not even have the rights of citizenship; [and] the Church, whose properties, which pertain to the poor, are threatened."[56] He also publicly venerated the Virgin of Pueblito. In 1858 the departmental authorities of Querétaro granted Mejía an honor sword, explaining in its inscription that the general had put his own sword at the virgin's feet and signaled her as the true leader of his troops.[57] Mejía carried her image everywhere, and frequently stopped to donate money at her satellite shrine near Tolimán whenever his forces passed nearby.[58] Olvera, too, was reputed to be a fervent believer. Liberal opponents dubbed him a "bandido religionero" during the Reform War, and he decried their "war [against] the Church of God."[59] Moreover, his survival beyond the Second Empire and his subsequent position as governor of Querétaro allowed him to exert perhaps an even greater influence over Catholic practice there than Mejía. The Liberal newspaper *El Siglo XIX* complained that Olvera had erected a Catholic state: "en Querétaro, more than anywhere else, one does not hear anything but the sound of bells … clerics wear full-length vestments … there are nothing more than religious

[55] Ibid., 46–48.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 49.
[58] Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 126.
[59] Miró Flaquer, *El general Rafael Olvera*, 47–48.

functions and devotional exercises … [and] they bury cadavers within the temples."[60] But what lay at the base of this Catholic zeal?

The Consolidation of Clerical Authority

Priests and parishioners were well integrated in the nineteenth-century Sierra Gorda de Querétaro. Unlike in Nayarit, where these two groups remained distinct classes unto themselves that alternately fought and compromised over the nature of religious worship, in Querétaro the clergy and their flock were connected through both horizontal and vertical ties. The groups had horizontal ties in the sense that leading serrano families had members in the clergy in a network that stretched from the Sierra to the urban hubs of the frontier and lowlands. And more humble parishioners maintained vertical ties to their priests through loans and other exchanges, continuing a trend evidenced at least as early as the late eighteenth century. There is as yet no evidence that either Mejía or Olvera attempted to re-center serrano Catholic devotion on their respective bases in Tolimán and Jalpan. Instead, Catholic spirituality here operated more fully within the bounds of the established Church structure.

First, the Mejía and Olvera families had developed extensive religious bonds by the Reform period. As detailed at the beginning of this chapter, a thick web of blood ties connected Mejía and his subordinates with Cadereyta minister Rafael Aguilar. As the priest explained, he was related to most of the rebel leader's sub-commanders, in addition to Mejía himself. This further implies Mejía was related to his own subordinates, as well. Aguilar also had close ties to the

[60] Ibid., 115–116.

ecclesiastical hierarchy in Mexico City. The dispute between Aguilar and the Cadereyta parish priest began earlier than the day Mejía rode into town. A little more than one month before in November 1852, Aguilar received a letter from Joaquín Primo de Rivera, the secretary of the Mexico See. In that letter, Primo identified himself as Aguilar's friend and chaplain and suggested the minister had nothing to worry about regarding his (undefined) dispute with the parish priest. As he explained, Primo would give a negative review of the priest if his superiors called him to a meeting.[61] While this remains to be explored, it is an interesting possibility that Mejía's ties, however distant, to the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Mexico City may have helped propel him to the national spotlight in this period.

The Olveras, too, developed links to the regional clergy. Various members of the extended family occasionally sent their daughters to Querétaro convents.[62] Not only does this demonstrate that the Olvera family was well off even by lowlands standards, it also suggests the family had ties to the urban ecclesiastical hierarchy. And, while this must remain speculation, it seems that some serrano priests were also related to the Olvera family.[63] In an 1855 letter to the Mexico See, the parishioners of Tolimán complained about their current priest, Pedro Pérez Velasco, for the vague reasons of his "aversion or ill will" toward them. Demonstrating the gravity of the matter, the parishioners of Tolimán had filed suit against Pérez. Coincidentally, both Pérez and the Xichú priest Cayetano Agustín Olvera had requested to switch parishes due to health issues.

[61] AHAM, 1853, caja 88, exp. 33, 20 November 1852.
[62] García, "La transición de hacendados a rancheros," 89.
[63] I say "speculation," because I cannot ascertain whether or not Cayetano Agustín Olvera is related to any Tolimán- or Jalpan-area Olveras.

In a draft letter to the Tolimán parishioners, the Mexico See agreed to bring Olvera to their parish if they dropped the suit, in order to "calm their spirits and restore peace."[64]

Second, a relationship built on mutual benefit developed between priests and their flock in this region. In this relationship, priests either held control of church funds, or were independently wealthy and financially supported the community in times of need. Extant Church and notarial records show, for example, that parishioners had ceded control over confraternities to priests by the mid nineteenth century. On one hand, disputes between priests and cofrades over the administration of confraternity property were few in this period as compared to the contemporary disputes in rural Nayarit.[65] On the other hand, evidence indicates that cofrades willingly parted with brotherhood property in order to subsidize church needs. "Indian" cofrades in Jalpan in 1839, for example, agreed to sell off a few plots of rented confraternity property in order to pay for church renovations.[66] Beyond the remarkable point that cofrades had willingly divested the brotherhood of land, that the land had already been converted to rental property suggests that cofrades trusted their priest to properly administer and distribute sodality funds. Indeed, the extant evidence suggests that serrano confraternities were relatively wealthy institutions and largely within the priest's exclusive purview by the 1840s. The same Jalpan priest, Rafael Martínez de los Rios, directly administered at least some rented confraternity territory, such as in 1845 when he adjusted the rent for two of the properties "that the confraternity of this Holy

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[64] AHAM, 1855, caja 100, exp. 21, 23 April 1855.
[65] James Cypher found an 1847 case in which the parish priest of Cadereyta seized a confraternity administrator's house in repayment "for debts he incurred while serving the cofradía"; Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 152. I did not find any disputes in either the AHAM or the parish archive of San Pedro and San Pablo of Cadereyta, Querétaro.
[66] AHEQ, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folios 55–59, 28 Aug. 1839; and ibid., folios 216–217, 28 Feb. 1840.

Church has for its cult" without any apparent input from cofrades.[67] Again, the next year Martínez unilaterally granted power of attorney to a San Luis Potosí resident in a legal case over a 400-peso debt that a local elite owed a Concá confraternity.[68] That the confraternity could lend 400 pesos also suggests that it had substantial capital at mid century. Area elites still endowed property to confraternities in this period, such as the Cadereyta elite who left his home, worth 550 pesos, to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament in 1849.[69] Furthermore, priests often subsisted on sodality funds, and treated the confraternity chest as their own personal savings. The parish priest of Arroyo Seco personally withdrew funds from the local confraternity over nearly a decade, and left some 434 pesos when he died in 1851. Municipal authorities asked the Jalpan prefect to intervene and protect the funds when the priest's replacement, too, threatened to appropriate the money.[70]

For their part, priests developed ties with parishioners by lending money, erecting schools, and participating in local politics. First, for every priest who subsisted on ecclesiastical funds, there was another wealthy priest who offered loans to parishioners in times of need. Perhaps unsurprising for a region so close to both the Mexican capital and one of the wealthiest provincial cities in the republic, the clergy along the Sierra's frontier had long been affluent. The vicar and ecclesiastical judge of San Francisco Tolimanejo, for example, purchased a house in 1808 in urban Querétaro for 1,000 pesos—a sum well beyond most ecclesiastics' annual income. And the Tolimán priest Br. D. Juan Bautista de la Pedrueza left behind the haciendas of Santo

[67] Ibid., folio 2, 19 Sept. 1845.
[68] Ibid., folio s/n, 12 Aug. 1846.
[69] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 152.
[70] Ibid., 153.

Tomas de la Estancia and San Nicolas Totolapa when he died in 1807.[71] This trend continued into the late 1830s as numerous priests bought up Indian land, as discussed above. Furthermore, the late-colonial practice of lending money to parishioners continued into the republican period, as well. Rafael Martínez de los Rios—the same priest who asked Indian cofrades to sell off brotherhood land for church repair—lent money to Indian leaders to satisfy a communal debt, which they paid off in 1842.[72]

Second, priests were also expected to serve the community in other important ways, such as by participating in regional politics and erecting schools. Jalpan residents elected two ecclesiastics as representatives in the state congress in late 1847, for example.[73] And in 1834, the residents of the Palmas mission in the Tolimán jurisdiction donated some communal property and all confraternity livestock to their friar Vicente Velásquez in order to erect a school and purchase agricultural tools.[74] Some clerics expanded their roles as public servants and organized regional political movements. The Palmas friar Velásquez in late 1848 incited rebellion among the area's missions, pueblos, and haciendas, exhorting residents to join his *Plan de indios* after Tomás Mejía abandoned his own plan against President José Joaquín de Herrera. While we do not know

[71] AHPJQ, Documentos indianos sin clasificar, caja 10, 07cri094, 6 Feb. 1807, folio 24.
[72] AHEQ, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio s/n, 14 March 1842.
[73] Ibid., folio s/n, 13 Sept. 1847; and ibid., folio s/n, 15 Nov. 1847.
[74] AHAM, 1840, caja 52, exp. 52. In this particular case, Fr. Velásquez had not begun construction of the school even six years later in 1840, and the mission residents submitted a complaint to the Mexican See. While this case does not necessarily indicate widespread school construction in the frontier and Sierra regions, it does at least suggest that priests were expected to help in this regard, and that some residents found schools desirable.

his plan's content, we know it was attractive enough to receive support from many Tolimán residents for months to come.[75]

Parishioners did, of course, occasionally raise complaints against their priests in the frontier and serrano regions. The alcalde of Bucareli pursued a legal case in 1838 against a friar in San Pedro Escanela for removing the monstrance, for example.[76] And Tolimán parishioners sought to replace their priest in 1855 for his "ill will," as discussed above. The ecclesiastical hierarchy also intervened at times. In 1851, the Mexican archbishop asked the governor of Querétaro to get involved in Jalpan, where the former priest there refused to hand over "very valuable jewelry" to his successor.[77] But these legal cases and complaints typically revolved around church ornaments, or the failure of a priest to comply with parishioners' requests. These were not the desperate protests of Nayarit parishioners who resisted the clergy's attempts to fulfill diocesan mandates, such as selling off or renting all confraternity property. On the contrary, these sorts of complaints demonstrate Sierra Gorda parishioners' desire to maintain the proper furnishings for the house of God, as well as to prod an unwilling priest to comply with his obligations to the community.

Although this must remain speculation pending further investigation, it seems a line can be drawn between the clergy of Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí on one side, and Querétaro clergy on the other, in the Sierra Gorda. On one hand, abusive, corrupt priests plagued the northern

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[75] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 164. See the next section for further examples of priests promoting civil disobedience.
[76] AHEQ, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio 35, 1 May 1838. This case drags on into the 1840s with no conclusion; see AHPJQ, Guadalupe Victoria, caja 1, Jalpan, 1841, "Contra Quirino Hernández por el robo de la custodia de la parroquia de Bucareli."
[77] Del Llano, *Iglesia y Sociedad en Querétaro*, 37.

regions in the years leading up to the Reform. James Cypher points to a number of "bad priests" in the San Luis Potosí ex-mission territory and in Guanajuato's Xichú parish. Secular priests were frequently absent from their parishes in southwestern San Luis Potosí, citing poor health as the reason for chronically abandoning their posts. And even if they did attend to their own parishes, these priests rarely visited outlying settlements. In the Real de Xichú, meanwhile, parishioners suffered under a violent, exploitative priest in 1850. Trinidad Tinoco charged exorbitant obventions, took advantage of the cholera epidemic by maintaining a monopoly on corn and selling it to the poor at high prices, and usurped confraternity territory and assaulted the administrator with a rifle. Although archdiocesan authorities ultimately removed Tinoco from his parish and calmed the situation there, problems then arose nearby when the priest of Victoria parish (formerly Xichú de Indios) abandoned his post the next year.[78]

On the other hand, in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro, priests allied with their parishioners to the point of joining them in Conservative rebellion in the same period. This was the result of two shifts in the nineteenth century. First, as serrano caciques grew in wealth and influence, they populated the local clergy with family members. Second, clergy in the frontier and Sierra regions—whether related to local families or not—tended to support their parishioners with loans, schools, and political service. These connections in the early nineteenth century drew the clergy to support and join rebellion during the Reform years of the late 1850s, to which we turn in the following section.

The Catalysts and Nature of Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century, 1832–1867

[78] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 155–162.

Amid the political instability of the postcolonial period, Indian groups and ranchers frequently participated in violent uprisings in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro to protest unwanted state interference in the region. But these were not simply attempts to gain autonomy. The lessons of the independence war were clear: localized grievances could be connected with national rebellions to effect deeper political change at both levels. Furthermore, the nature of these rebellions changed over time. This shift was largely a consequence of the expanding cacique and clerical authority in the Sierra Gorda during the first half of the nineteenth century. At first, rebellion was largely structured around defending local agrarian practice against state intervention—in the 1830s, small-scale growers fought to maintain free tobacco cultivation. But beginning in the late 1840s, rebellion took aim at the state as caciques with military backgrounds and links to the clergy led troops to defend the colonial-era privileges granted to the institutions of the military and the Church. These outward-looking uprisings reached their climax in the Reform wars of the 1850s and 60s.

The Early Localocentric Rebellions of the Nineteenth Century

Tobacco's long-term history in Querétaro's Sierra Gorda is not well documented, but by the early republican period small-scale producers had widely embraced the crop. Although statistics are difficult, if not impossible, to come by, the inefficient structure of the tobacco monopoly in the late colonial period practically guaranteed that the Querétaro hinterland would supply a contraband crop since the mid eighteenth century. The city housed a cigarette factory but had to import legitimately grown tobacco from as far away as Veracruz and the Yucatán. Furthermore,

tobacco's high unit value made it an attractive crop, and small-scale farmers could easily participate given it required little start-up capital and few tools.[79] Tobacco cultivation survived into the republican period, and a contraband crop could still be found on the outskirts of urban Querétaro in the 1820s.[80]

But whatever policies had governed tobacco to that point, the postcolonial state quickly and violently intervened with disastrous consequences. The government of Vicente Guerrero officially ended the state monopoly in 1829 and declared tobacco a free crop. This freedom was short-lived. The Guerrero measure was prorogated in March 1831, and the Anastasio Bustamante government permanently repealed the law in June 1832 and again subjected the crop to a monopoly.[81] Tobacco had already proliferated in the Jalpan district, and enforcers of the monopoly in Querétaro had been preparing to seize the crop in Jalpan since at least January 1832.[82] Such a move was impolitic. As discussed above, in July 1832 one "Mejía" allegedly led a gang of "Indians and corrupt outlaws" in the Jalpan district in support of the Plan de Veracruz to unseat Bustamante. The military report offers no explanation for the gang's activity, or even this Mejía's first name. Nevertheless, it is telling that the Bustamante decree was published in

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[79] Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers*, 16, 112.
[80] One Nicolás Gaitán was caught while mistakenly attempting to sell contraband tobacco to a watchman in the Hacienda de Amascala in 1827, for example; AHPJQ, Guadalupe Victoria, caja 2, Querétaro 1827, "Contra Nicolás Gaitán por contrabandista de tabaco."
[81] The decree was circulated in Querétaro on 6 June 1832. Article 1: "The law of 23 May 1829, which declared the cultivation and sale of tobacco to be free from the end of December 1830, is derogated, along with the law of 24 March 1831, in the part that suspended the effects of this law only to the end of December 1832." Article 2: "Tobacco [cultivation] will be prohibited in all Mexican states, and only the general government will concede the ability to cultivate it"; AHEQ, Poder Ejecutivo, 1832, 6 June 1832.
[82] Ibid., "yndice de los decretos y oficios que se han recibido en la Secretaria de la Junta Consultiva dirigidos por la del Sup. Gob. del Estado en el mes de [enero]," 23 Jan. 1832.

Querétaro only one month before this report. Furthermore, Cristóbal Mejía appears at the head of another tobacco-based rebellion less than a decade later.

Whatever the nature of the alleged 1832 rebellion, an uprising in 1839–1841 in the Tolimán and Jalpan districts of Querétaro demonstrated how a local grievance could help fuel a national movement. Beset by economic problems and forced loans for the central government, the Querétaro governor Ramón Covarrubias ordered the serrano tobacco harvest seized toward the end of the 1830s.[83] In response, the unknown Pedro Plá initiated the uprising, and rebels quickly sought help from Cristóbal Mejía.[84] The serrano cacique in turn linked the uprising to a contemporaneous federalist revolt led by José Urrea from Tampico, and Urrea marched to Jalpan by 1841.[85] The centralist president—Anastasio Bustamante, again—sent federal troops to the Sierra Gorda to restore order.

Just as in 1832, the 1839–41 rebellion functioned on two levels. On one hand, localized rebellion had national implications. The Sierra uprising was successfully incorporated into a federalist revolt through the cacique Cristóbal Mejía and his connections to military men outside the region. Furthermore, both the federal officers Juvera and Cano sought to neutralize the young Tomás Mejía by removing him from the Sierra and putting him on the path to a military career elsewhere. In both uprisings of the 1830s, the elder Mejía proved adept at playing a much broader political game and brought remote mountain rebellions to the attention of national authorities.

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[83] García, *Breve historia de Querétaro*, 135.
[84] Hamnett, "The Formation of a Mexican Conservative Leader," 128.
[85] Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 13–15.

But on the other hand, local interests fed the fighting. Some regional leaders apparently used the uprising as an opportunity to settle old scores, for instance. One of these leaders was Pedro Coronel, a perennial justice of the peace from Jalpan who also sold land to aspirant ranchers in the 1830s and 40s. Together with Guadalupe Visuete, a local elite who bought up much of that Indian land, Coronel burned the house of one Ygnacio Vega in 1839 in the nearby Tancama ranch. While the extant evidence does not detail the crime or its aims, it is likely the pair took advantage of the rebellion to rid themselves of an opponent.[86] Additionally, the federal military officers sent in to quell the uprising clearly understood the movement as a local affair related to tobacco cultivation. Rather than violently putting down the rebellion, both Julian Juvera and Juan Cano "sympathized with the rebels" as the poor victims of "the iniquities that the fiscal agents in charge of destroying tobacco fields committed," and merely occupied the region for a time.[87] Moreover, tobacco administrators stated they were unable to collect fines from clandestine tobacco growers in the Sierra for at least three years afterward.[88] Stirring more rebellion for the sake of a few plants was clearly not a priority for state authorities.

Tomás Mejía and the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro on the National Stage

[86] AHEQ, Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio 199, 20 Aug. 1839. It should be noted that the Vegas were an elite family in the Sierra, and were frequently targets of Indian leaders. Cristóbal Mejía had Felipe Vega assassinated in 1839, as discussed above, and Vicente Vega was one of Tomás Mejía's principal Liberal opponents during the Reform wars.
[87] Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 16.
[88] The administrators and military commanders in charge of destroying contraband tobacco plants claimed they had not been able to collect the fines for the years 1842 to 1845; AHEQ, Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1828–1847, folio s/n, 15 Nov. 1845.

But as local and state actors began to threaten the very bases of serrano society—the military and the clergy—rebellions ceased to be movements designed merely to oust unwanted state intervention, and instead looked beyond the Sierra Gorda to right the misguided state itself. Tomás Mejía, the actor largely responsible for this shift, inhabited two worlds. On one hand, he was a product of the Sierra Gorda, the heir to his father's cacicazgo and thus a nascent politico-military leader in the Querétaro highlands. On the other hand, he spent a decade outside the Sierra on military campaigns and thus attained a broader national worldview: one populated by "barbaric Indians," a war with the United States, and military men with greater political ambitions. Mejía was not content merely to mold incipient uprisings into national rebellions, as his father had. Instead, he went a step farther and initiated rebellion against the central government of his own accord, drawing on serrano troops to help him achieve his aims.

Tomás Mejía became a much more nationally renowned figure than his father as he, too, linked local uprising to national movements when he returned to the Sierra Gorda after completing his service in the U.S.-Mexican war. Amid the multiple rebellions of the late 1840s, he cemented a role as the defender of order and clerical status against the "caste war" of army deserter Eleuterio Quiroz. Among other aims, Quiroz sought to dissolve the federal army and strip the clergy of all vestiges of civil authority. In article 4 of his 1849 "Plan político y eminentemente social," any permanent forces were to be disbanded within one month and replaced by a national guard. Regarding the Church, article 6 stated that "the clergy is to be reformed as the well-being of the Republic demands, in order to raise the morality of its individuals and in order to remove from their hands this formidable and harmful political power they have always possessed through their

abundant rents and the ignorance of the masses."[89] Although the rebellion was based in the Guanajuato Sierra, rebel bands soon appeared in the Tolimán and Jalpan districts and attacked haciendas and ranches. Faced with this threat to his own preeminence in the region, Mejía agreed to pursue Quiroz. Significantly, Mejía did this despite launching a parallel rebellion in June 1848 protesting the U.S.-Mexican treaty. The aspirant cacique's forces captured Quiroz in October 1849, and the rebel leader was executed soon afterward. The central government subsequently attempted to impose order on the Sierra Gorda and Tomás Mejía became the face of that order. Hundreds of Quiroz's troops were exiled to northern Mexico, land was redistributed in Jalpan and Cadereyta, and Pres. Mariano Arista established a number of military colonies. While these colonies failed without adequate funding, Santa Anna attempted to revive government control of the region by divesting Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Querétaro of land and regrouping it as the Territory of the Sierra Gorda. The dictator placed Mejía in charge of its military jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, militant Conservatism thrived in the lowlands, opening the way for a strong relationship between highland rebels and lowland elites. Bookending the first half of the nineteenth century, Querétaro was both a prosperous royalist base in the independence period, as discussed above, and the site of the Second Empire's last stand against Constitutionalist forces. In between, the Querétaro state government broadly supported the Church. Numerous articles in the 1824 state constitution supported Catholic religion and education, for example. Civil authorities named the Virgin of Pueblito the patroness of both the state and city of Querétaro in 1830, and in 1840 the Querétaro ayuntamiento decreed that she be brought to the city in times of

[89] Llano Ibáñez, *Iglesia y sociedad*, 44–45.

epidemic, famine, drought, "or whichever other calamity or public need."[90] This devotion was not merely ceremonial. The Querétaro state legislature was the first to demand the repeal of Gómez Farías's 15 million-peso forced loan against Church property in 1847, one day after the loan was enacted.[91]

It was in this context of an increasingly militant Church that Mejía's subsequent actions propelled him to become the national champion of Conservatism. He was among the first to denounce the Liberal Ayutla government in 1854, and among the last to stand by the Second Empire in the siege of Querétaro in 1867. In terms of the religious cause Mejía embodied, Hamnett suggests his execution on 19 June 1867 may have been "the most important […] among the three"—the other two being Conservative general and politician Miguel Miramón and the Emperor himself.[92] And Mejía made known his support of the Church and clerical privilege from the beginning. As detailed above, he defended the clergy's right to citizenship and the institution's properties, "which pertain to the poor," in his anti-Ayutla Plan de la Sierra Gorda, pronounced on 2 December 1855.[93] When a subsequent rebellion in Puebla—funded in part by the ecclesiastical hierarchy there—fell before Liberal leader Ignacio Comonfort in late 1856, Mejía rallied and took the city of Querétaro. That city embraced its local hero, but many other towns surrounding the Sierra Gorda in Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Hidalgo opposed Mejía and denounced the "seditious clerics" who supported him.[94] Indeed, the rising Conservative

[90] Ibid., 47–51.
[91] Costeloe, "Church-State Financial Negotiations," 102.
[92] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 205.
[93] Miró, *El general Rafael Olvera*, 46–48.
[94] Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 191.

officer spread his self-proclaimed "most holy of all causes" into surrounding states, and Comonfort sent the military to the Sierra Gorda in order to stop these "bandidos religioneros."[95]

Although Mejía suffered military setbacks against the gathered Liberal forces, many of the frontier and serrano clergy were nevertheless emboldened to publicly oppose the new government. In April 1857, Liberal general José María Arteaga ordered two priests arrested in Tequisquiapan and Cadereyta for denouncing the 1857 Constitution and "inculcating in the state's inhabitants subversive ideas against the established authorities."[96] Indeed, the Cadereyta priest that year had embarked on an anti-constitutional campaign. He threatened excommunication for all who did not reject the 1857 charter, and pressured the alcalde of Tetillas, who called the priest the "wise interpreter of the bishop's will," to do the same.[97] Later that same year, a priest in nearby Guanajuato fled his parish and joined Mejía's troops in Querétaro, where he encouraged parishioners there to join the fight against the Ayutla government.[98]

A Conservative coup d'état thrust Mejía from Querétaro and onto the national stage. Following the victory of the Plan de Tacubaya, acting president Gen. Félix Zuloaga granted Mejía broad

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[95] Mejía declared his "defense of religion" and the "most holy of all causes" in Tamazunchale, San Luis Potosí, and the Liberal general José María Arteaga labeled Mejía's forces "bandidos religioneros"; AHSEDENA, Operaciones militares, XI/481.3/5293, folio 225; and ibid., 192.
[96] Llano Ibáñez, *Iglesia y sociedad*, 61.
[97] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 168. This was likely not Francisco Legorreta, who in 1853 denounced his minister Rafael Aguilar for participating in political pronunciamientos; see above. Pablo Mijangos y González has recently done extensive research on the acceptance or rejection of the 1857 Constitution at the pueblo level across the entire country, drawing on the model developed by Timothy Tackett for the ecclesiastical oath of 1791 in France. For Mijangos, see "La negativa al juramento constitucional en 1857." For Tackett, see *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture*.
[98] Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 165.

authority in his home region. Mejía obtained both military and civil command of the Territory of the Sierra Gorda, and then the governorship of the Departments of Querétaro and Guanajuato by late 1858. Now the point man in a Conservative stronghold, he led military campaigns in distant Jalisco and Tamaulipas while his second-in-command, Rafael Olvera, held the Sierra. After a Liberal victory in 1861, Zuloaga and another Conservative general, Leonardo Márquez, based themselves in the Sierra Gorda alongside Mejía and continued to harass the Liberal government. Their combined forces took Pachuca in October of that year, for example.[99]

From 1862 to 1867, Mejía's increasingly important role in the Imperial forces elevated him to the status of Conservative symbol, and thus a necessary target for those who reassumed power after the Empire's fall. The Juárez government appealed to Mejía twice to help it oppose the French Intervention, once in December 1861 and again a year later.[100] Although he did not initially support the French invasion, Mejía nonetheless rejected Juárez's entreaties and sent troops to aid the Empire in mid 1863. He soon became the "principal Conservative commander in the field" as the other key generals Miramón and Márquez, whom Maximilian distrusted, were sent on missions to Europe in 1864. As war dragged on and French interest in occupying Mexican territory waned, the imperial government soon found itself isolated. Maximilian made his final stand in the city of Querétaro alongside Mejía, but defeat was inevitable. Entities as diverse as the Johnson administration of the United States and Manuel Lozada, writing as "a Mexican [on behalf of] all the indigenous tribes of the Sierra del Nayarit," appealed to save the

[99] Information for the above paragraph from Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 194–197.
[100] Ibid., 198–199.

lives of the captives.[101] But for Juárez, Mejía stood among those deemed too significant to spare, too representative of the ideology that opposed a Liberal government.

Mejía tended to local concerns in the Sierra Gorda Queretana, of course. This region was his continuing base of support and the source of his armies. As he explained in a letter to the war minister in 1858, poor laborers composed the Battalion and Squadron of the Sierra Gorda under his command.[102] He continued to lead various serrano units through the Second Empire.[103] And Mejía and his compatriots always took flight to the Sierra for safety, particularly the Tolimán and Jalpan districts.[104] Thus it comes as no surprise that Mejía and his troops visited and donated money to highlands shrines, as mentioned above. His supporters patrolled the cult during the war years. In 1860, for example, the prefect of San Juan del Río wrote to the governor that, while he did take the requested inventory of the churches and chapels in his jurisdiction, he was afraid of removing the ornaments due to the possible reprisals from Mejía's supporters in the town.[105] Moreover, Mejía continued to address grievances in Jalpan, the base of his and his father's prefecture. In 1855, for example, he complained that some buyers of Indian land were appropriating more than what they had legally purchased.[106] And, as part of his conditional surrender in 1861, Mejía demanded new elections for the Jalpan district, apparently a source of conflict.[107]

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[101] Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, 198–200.
[102] AHSEDENA, Operaciones militares, XI/481.3/6146, folios 7–8.
[103] Díaz, *La vida heroica de Tomás Mejía*, 115–116.
[104] Liberal general and interim Querétaro governor José María Arteaga declared the districts of Tolimán, Jalpan, and Amealco under siege in 1861, for instance; ibid., 177.
[105] Llano Ibáñez, *Iglesia y sociedad*, 63.
[106] Ibid., 62.
[107] AHSEDENA, Operaciones militares, XI/481.3/3961, folio 162.

But unlike Lozada, who leveraged regional and national recognition to achieve local reform, Mejía seems to have done the opposite: namely, he leveraged local discontent to achieve national reform. While much more work remains to be done to understand how Mejía recruited his troops—as well as his connection to Rafael Olvera, his main pillar of support in the Sierra—the evidence examined thus far points to Mejía being more involved on the regional and national levels than on the local level. In the time between returning from the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848 and again leaving the area on long-range campaigns in late 1858, Mejía pronounced or seconded other national pronunciamientos no fewer than five times, in 1848, 1853, 1855, 1856, and 1858.[108] Moreover, religious change in this period focused on urban Querétaro, which became the site of a new diocese in 1864, and not in the highlands. There is as yet no evidence of a religious upheaval in Tolimán or Jalpan on the scale of what occurred in Nayarit during the same period. As discussed in the first half of this study, Lozada's followers rebelled in order to restore local religious control that had been lost in the decades before the Reform. But in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro, Mejía's soldiers instead fought to maintain the privileges they had recently gained in the first half of the nineteenth century, through the gradual accumulation of land and the blood and financial ties established with the local clergy.

Conclusion

[108] In 1848, Mejía seconded the "Proclamation of Gen. Paredes y Arrillaga, raising arms against the government of the Republic, protesting the approval of the peace treaties with the United States," of 15 June 1848; Cypher, "Reconstituting Community," 19. In 1853, Mejía seconded the Plan del Hospicio of 20 Oct. 1852; AHAM, 1853, caja 88, exp. 33. On 2 Dec. 1855, Mejía pronounced his Plan de la Sierra Gorda in Jalpan; Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," 191. On 8 Oct. 1856, Mejía pronounced "Religión y fueros" in Peñamiller and promptly took the city of Querétaro; ibid. In 1858, Mejía seconded the Plan de Tacubaya of 17 Dec. 1857; Díaz, *La vida heroica*, 49.

During the wars of the mid nineteenth century, fighters from the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro gave their lives to support the Conservative preservation of military and clerical status. This broad support was the result of a gradual process by which leading serrano families—both Otomí and not—recaptured local power. The domineering haciendas that were introduced in the late colonial period began to fragment in the early nineteenth century due both to the ravages of the independence wars and legislation aimed at disamortization. Tolimán and Jalpan elites, alongside other soldiers and clergy, purchased much of this ex-hacienda land along with that of many serrano municipalities. Moreover, these elites adopted military and political careers in order to legitimize their informal authority. They also entered the clergy, both within the Sierra and in the urban centers of the frontier and lowlands such as Cadereyta and Querétaro. When a Liberal Mexican state threatened those twin pillars of Sierra Gorda life—the military and the Church—Tolimán and Jalpan fighters rallied to the ascendant caciques Tomás Mejía and Rafael Olvera. From 1848 to 1867, serrano troops participated in national campaigns to restore a Conservative state. Their failure certainly ended the Conservative Party's attempts to overtly regain political power, but support for the Church and its ministers continued to manifest itself throughout the remainder of the century and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The one hundred years from 1750 to 1850 were crucial to the development of the Mexican state. In that period, the political environment transitioned from that of a colony governed by a distant metropole to a sovereign republican state. Power transferred to local municipal officials as they displaced colonial bureaucrats and the clergy as mediators between rural peasants and the central government. Regional militias, too, grew at the expense of the central army. The economy also transformed as first colonial, then Mexican authorities relaxed trade restrictions. Numerous ports and coastal areas enjoyed unprecedented commerce. In the process, the country traded colonial subjugation for the neo-colonial variety. While New Spain was the largest jewel of the Spanish Crown—supplying the silver that kept the empire afloat amid numerous international wars—Mexico became a debtor to multiple foreign nations, which attempted to regulate the new country's economic affairs via gunboats in its major harbors and the occasional skirmish on the coast.[1]

Scholars of popular politics in Mexico have demonstrated that many of these national political developments in fact occurred from the ground up.[2] By joining in cross-class rebellions and supporting broad political programs, "Mexico's peasants were central to both the destruction of the Spanish colonial state and the formation of the Mexican national state."[3] Historians such as Florencia Mallon, Peter Guardino, and Guy Thomson have indisputably deepened our understanding of Mexican politics in the early republican era. But despite their excellent studies,

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[1] For example, Spain attempted a reconquest in 1829, France invaded in 1838 and again from 1862–67, and the United States in 1846–48.
[2] See the introduction to this study.
[3] Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State*, 4.

few have yet begun to examine peasants' relationship with the Church, or even consider that such a relationship was important. What can be gained by studying popular Conservatism?

First, it must be emphasized that the Mexican Catholic Church in the republican era hardly represented an unchanging institution carried over from the colonial period. Alongside political and economic changes in Mexico, the period witnessed dramatic ecclesiastical transformation, as well. The colonial church was inextricably linked to the Spanish government. The monarch functioned as the vicar of the Americas and exercised veto power over clerical appointments, while the tithe and religious vows were enforced by the state. Meanwhile, the clergy served as a colonial vanguard and settled the frontiers with missions, and often substituted for absent civil officials in remote regions. But this unique relationship fell apart piece by piece in the post-independence era through a series of failed negotiations between Church and state: first over the patronato, then over financial arrangements such as ecclesiastical landholding, lending, and the tithe. The Church no longer served as co-ruler with the state. Instead, the clergy sought to lead the "quest for Mexican national identity" in opposition to civil authorities.[4]

As the present study demonstrates, rural Mexican parishioners had a hand in this transformation. In Nayarit, an aggressive laity forced a relatively Liberal ecclesiastical hierarchy to suspend its reform campaigns. During the first decades of the republican era, clerical pressure to reform rural confraternities and religious practices led to aggressive conflict with parishioners. Cofrades attempted various means to deflect these reforms. In some cases, they hid religious property from clerical personnel. In others, cofrades sought the aid of civil authorities in appropriating sodality

[4] Connaughton, *Clerical Ideology*, 16.

property. Parishioners also turned to religious entrepreneurs to substitute for unpopular priests. By the mid nineteenth century, a critical mass of the laity had turned to violence in order to regain control over lost property. The Church responded with compromise. Manuel Lozada and his followers obtained a new parish (albeit temporary and informal), a priest of their choosing, and the sanctioned restoration of some confraternity property. The Guadalajara hierarchy certainly experienced horizontal pressure to halt its reforms from other dioceses, but such pressure does not explain why Lozada was permitted to transform the rural Church. The Guadalajara See at least tacitly supported Conservative rebellion in this period due to pressure from below.

The Querétaro Church was also constructed from the parish level, but this development came from within. Parishioners along and in the Sierra Gorda de Querétaro cooperated with local priests beginning in the late colonial period, driving out unwanted colonial officials and resisting encroaching landowners. This relationship deepened in the nineteenth century as leading serrano families supplied members to join the clergy both in the highlands and lowlands. While these autochthonous clergy could not have been very numerous, they nevertheless created a space in the Sierra Gorda and in urban Querétaro for militant priests to join the popular Conservative movement at midcentury. Unlike in Nayarit, where a popular Conservative movement coerced the diocesan hierarchy to align with its interests, in Querétaro the Church was directly linked to and helped shape popular Conservatism alongside rebel fighters.

Investigating popular Conservatism, then, enables us to more fully understand the decades of conflict and civil wars that plagued Mexico in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Conservative rebels were not simply a mass of undifferentiated fighters who blindly followed an inert Church. Instead, rebels chose alternative authorities with whom to negotiate and seek compromise, authorities who respected rebels' holy cause and their attempts to retain Catholicism in its prominent place in Mexican society. Liberal authorities, by contrast, sought too drastic a transformation and threatened the religious foundations of much of rural Mexican life. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of this negotiation between Conservative rebels and the clergy demonstrates the various ways the Church attempted to survive in the post-independence environment. The Guadalajara Church sought to coexist alongside a secular civil state, complying with certain reforms and negotiating others. Meanwhile, the Querétaro Church sought to prop up a clerical state instead, forcing civil authorities to acknowledge the Church's primacy. Neither method worked after 1821. The Guadalajara See ran up against parishioner intransigence; the laity would not permit such unfettered reform. Meanwhile, the Querétaro clergy fell before Liberal military power; the independent state would not permit a return to ecclesiastical co-rule. The Church had to choose another path in order to survive in an independent Mexico.

Catholicism and Religious Rebellion in Mexico, 1867–Present

Three days before Christmas in 1878, an exposé appeared in the Liberal Querétaro newspaper *El Precursor*. According to the writer,

> "it is well known that on Capuchinas Street, we have a conventicle of secularized Capuchin nuns; in the corridors of San Felipe, a novitiate of the order of San Felipe Neri; in Pueblito, another swarm of Franciscans; and in the ruins of Santa Clara and the ex-convent de la Cruz,

> other tonsures who practice monastic life with the knowledge of [Gov. Antonio Gayón], his legislature, his tribunal, his prefect, his judges, his police, and his gendarmerie."

Benito Juárez had suppressed the regular orders with the Reform laws of 1859, and his successor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada—the brother of Miguel, author of the 1856 Lerdo Law—had fully enshrined them in the Mexican constitution. Nevertheless, paranoia about cells of Catholic zealots was running high.

It seemed such fears in Querétaro were exaggerated. After investigating the newspaper's claims, Querétaro authorities found nothing more than a dozen secularized nuns huddled together in Casa #2 on Capuchinas Street. The elderly women claimed that they had gathered only to tend to each other's ailments, and did not answer to any religious superior. The state officials ordered them to disperse, and that was the end of the matter.[5]

Viewed from the perspective of government authorities in the latter years of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church was a dying institution. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had supported the defeated side in two civil wars. The government subsequently nationalized Church property, shuttered convents, and prohibited its citizens from taking religious vows or attending a Catholic school. Moreover, it seemed that Mexican society was secularizing. Certainly, the fall of the Second Empire did not bring peace to all parts of the country. Catholic rebels called *religioneros* had risen up in Michoacán and surrounding states to violently protest Lerdo de Tejada's anticlerical policies from 1873–1876.[6] But the Church hierarchy largely sidestepped this revolt,

[5] AHSCJNQ, Primer Juzgado del Distrito, Penal, caja 5, exp. 00062.
[6] Stauffer, " 'Death to the Protestants!' " 1.

condemning violence. And many leading rebels were ultimately co-opted into Porfirio Díaz's government in the late 1870s and '80s, then quietly assassinated.[7]

But if Catholicism was dying in the late nineteenth century, its final death has yet to occur. Indeed, the century and a half of Mexican history after the Reform has demonstrated that the Church has thrived in a hostile environment. Particularly onerous anticlerical legislation or enforcement has given rise to popular movements that challenge the state. Facing an intractable constituency that responds to the clergy's call—or anticipates that call, at times—the state has consistently retreated from its hard-line positions.

It is now becoming clear, for example, that legislative attempts to reduce Church wealth were not entirely effective. As José Roberto Juárez has recently uncovered, the Guadalajara Diocese quietly recuperated some 30 to 50 percent of its lost wealth by 1911.[8] That it was able to do so reflects as much Catholicism's continuing influence within the post-Reform population, as it did the Church's vitality as an institution. This wealth was regained through *arreglos de conciencia* (conscientious agreements), in which those who had obtained ecclesiastical property through either the 1856 Lerdo Law, the 1859 nationalization decree, or their corollaries would agree to pay a sum to the Church in order to save their souls.[9] Clearly, the Church retained potent moral and spiritual authority into the twentieth century.

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[7] Stauffer, " 'Death to the Protestants!' " 6, 7.
[8] Juárez, *Reclaiming Church Wealth*, 165.
[9] Ibid., 51–68.

Indeed, although Catholic rebellion subsided in the remaining decades of the nineteenth century, the flock supported the Church in other ways. Beginning in the 1860s and continuing through the rest of the century, the ecclesiastical hierarchy turned to its female parishioners for the rebirth of the Church. In June 1866, for example, Francisco Valadéz—the Franciscan friar responsible for the popular missions in Jala—proudly reported to Guadalajara Bishop Espinosa that he had helped establish the perpetual veneration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. This veneration was carried on entirely by women: 33 of whom now comprised the confraternity of the same name. Espinosa perhaps best summed up the clergy's line of thinking when he explained that, "with the cult [these women] offer to Our Lord of the Sacrament, the offenses he daily receives from men will be expiated."[10] Of course, women had participated in earlier brotherhoods. Indeed, in 1827 just over half the members of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Assumption in Santa María del Oro were women.[11]

But beginning in the Second Empire the Nayarit clergy's emphasis on female parishioners and girls' schools signaled a shift in outreach. In addition to the female confraternity, Fr. Valadéz also fought the ayuntamiento to keep the Jala girls' school open, which he had founded and funded by himself as he was "convinced of the necessity of the religious and political education of [these girls]." By 1867, he was happy to report, the majority of schoolgirls could write, and some were beginning to embroider.[12]

[10] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1864–1866, 7 July 1866.
[11] AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 16, 29 March 1827.
[12] AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1867–1868, 10 Oct. 1867.

It is unclear whether or not this shift was precipitated by the exigencies of war. With men off in the hills, perhaps women stepped in and appropriated worship. But while the war may have provided the catalyst, Fr. Valadéz's interest in the girls' school suggests this "feminization" was as at least partly a product of clerical redirection as well as the mere demographics of the flock. Moreover, Valadéz supported the girls' school while neglecting the boys' institution, by his own admission.[13]

The Catholic hierarchy also quietly re-entered the public sphere as a political actor immediately after the Second Empire, supporting political organizations and, later, workers' unions. After Tomás Mejía, the clerical crusader, fell before a firing squad, surviving Conservatives opted for a less militant, less overtly political role in the country's urban centers. Together with an ultramontane clergy, many formed the Catholic Society of the Mexican Nation in 1868. The society formed a series of commissions that fostered lay orthodoxy in the following years, such as those dedicated to the divine cult, the catechism, and Catholic higher education in 1868 and '69. But in the years after Lerdo de Tejada assumed the presidency, socially active Catholics began to establish workers' unions. In Guadalajara, for example, women and men established the Mutual-Aid Society of the Daughters of Labor as well as a male workers' circle in 1880 and 1883, respectively.[14] Pope Leo XIII then gave new impetus to Catholic social activism with his *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things") in 1891. The encyclical promoted better working conditions for laborers, and advocated social justice. In this new policy, according to historian Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, "militant Catholics found […] a bulwark against the modernizing State, and

[13] Ibid., 9 Jan. 1868.
[14] Ceballos, *El catolicismo social*, 53.

against the social and political costs that modernization carried."[15] The new Catholic geopolitical axis fell onto urban areas where Catholicism had long flourished, such as Querétaro, Guadalajara, and Puebla. The Vatican cannily rewarded this Bible Belt for its support during key moments. Quéretaro became home to a new diocese at the height of the Second Empire in 1864, and Tepic was elevated to a diocese in 1891, one month after the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum*.

But the ecclesiastical hierarchy's focus on the urban sphere belied the continuing threat of Catholic militancy in the countryside. As noted above, the religionero movement in Michoacán, Jalisco, Querétaro, Guanajuato, and the Estado de México emerged in the 1870s and '80s in the wake of Lerdo de Tejada's anticlericalism. As Brian Stauffer argues, the fact that the late-nineteenth-century Díaz government co-opted these rebels does not mean they had little lasting impact on political relations with the Church. On the contrary, this rural violence in part forced Díaz to pursue a "politics of conciliation" with the Church in order to forestall further uprising.[16]

The early catalyst to the religionero rebellion was the polarizing oath to the 1857 constitution. While the Lerdo de Tejada government required all public officials to swear an oath to the Liberal charter, the ecclesiastical hierarchy threatened to excommunicate all who did. Oath-swearing ceremonies sparked riots in rural communities, and rebel *pronunciamientos* against the government soon followed. By 1875, dozens of rebel bands in Michoacán, for instance, coalesced into the Army of Mexican Salvation and sought to overturn the 1857 constitution and

[15] Ibid., 15–16.
[16] Stauffer, " 'Death to the Protestants!' ", 6.

re-establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican, which had been cut off since 1867.[17] While religioneros achieved neither of these aims, they did aid Porfirio Díaz's rise to power as he ousted Lerdo de Tejada from Mexico City.

But with Díaz's fall in 1910 and the consequent Revolution, militant Catholicism again flared in both the urban and rural spheres. As Matthew Butler contends, "religion and Revolution were linked in a dialectic in which the radicalization of society was accompanied by innovative, often improvised, responses in the religious sphere."[18] In the cities, the collapse of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship left a political opening for multiple contending parties. The innovative response from women, workers, and the youth in Guadalajara was the development of a Catholic citizenship. As it had done a century earlier in the decade after independence, the Jaliscan state government in the 1910s developed its own anticlerical decrees, which were often more aggressive than those of the central state. A 1918 decree, for example, limited the ratio of priests/churches to parishioners to 1 : 5,000. Moreover, the state required all clergy to be licensed, which included a photograph and an official registry noting the priest's church, residence, and income.[19] Catholic political groups directly opposed the Jaliscan state over the next decade, "constituting themselves as parallel organizations in competition with the state for its constituencies and exercising a major influence in the public sphere."[20]

And many rural parishioners again rose in outright rebellion when the state began to aggressively enforce the 1917 constitution's anticlerical measures. Revolutionary political leaders and

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[17] Ibid., 5.
[18] Butler, "A Revolution in Spirit?", 4.
[19] Curley, " 'The First Encounter,' " 137.
[20] Ibid., 145.

military men embarked on "defanaticization" campaigns during the late 1920s, violently purging their districts of all clerical influence. At either end of Mexico's geographic extremes—Sinaloa and Sonora, Chiapas and Tabasco—all churches were closed, and many destroyed. Teams of *quemasantos* ("saint burners") would publicly torch Catholic images they had collected in raids.[21] Priests, too, came under the gun. After a military officer herded unregistered priests into Tepic, for instance, he warned one cleric that he could either remain in the city or risk "losing his head" should he leave.[22]

Parishioners in the more clerical center-west subsequently fought back in a movement called the *Cristiada*, or the *cristero* rebellion.[23] While leaders from urban Catholic organizations sent military chiefs to lead the revolt, this was primarily a rural movement.[24] Looking south from his post in Mazatlán, for example, the U.S. consul remarked that, "with the Nayarit state line, the real hold of the Church starts." Furthermore, the movement in this "ancient Catholic stronghold" was principally supported by women, including "the better classes and the rural section of the state."[25] And with the *Cristiada* came another "laicization" of the faith. As priests hid from authorities, peasants assumed clerical duties. In the absence of clerical oversight and with their bishops in exile, the remaining ecclesiastical authorities permitted parishioners to perform

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[21] Bantjes, "Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico," 100–101.
[22] Bantjes, "The Regional Dynamics of Anticlericalism and Defanaticization," 117.
[23] Jean Meyer wrote the classic text on this movement, but more recent studies by scholars such as Matthew Butler and Jennie Purnell have added necessary depth to our understanding of the period and parishioners' role in it. See, respectively, *La cristiada*; *Popular Piety and Political Identity*; and *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*.
[24] Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity*, 179–180.
[25] Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs in Mexico (RDSRIAM), Roll 146, U.S. Consul in Mazatlán William Blocker to Secretary of State, 2 October 1926. Special thanks go to Ben Fallaw for generously lending me his notes on the *cristero* period in Nayarit.

marriages, baptisms, last rites, and "white masses," or ceremonies without the Eucharist.[26] After three years of brutal warfare, the Mexican state relented under Pres. Emilio Portes Gil in 1929 and the rebellion came to a close, although new uprisings such as *la Segunda Cristiada* reacted to local outrages through the 1930s.

Also in that decade, a right-wing Catholic political movement took root in order to combat socialism. The *sinarquistas*—named for their opposition to left-wing politics under the catch-all term "anarchy"—modeled their movement on Spanish fascism in the 1930s and 1940s. Although religious-based political parties were illegal in this period, the National Synarchist Union (UNS) nevertheless garnered widespread support, and a half-million members, in the Catholic heartland.[27] Through massive political demonstrations, the organization plagued the moderately socialist government of Lázaro Cárdenas in the late 1930s. While the union never organized a mass military movement, it was responsible for violence at the local level. Armed groups tied to the sinarquistas attacked federal schools and schoolteachers in this period.[28] They also attacked conscription offices during World War II.[29] In a reprisal of Díaz's and Portes Gil's policies toward the institutional Church, Cárdenas's successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho, adopted a more conciliatory position. He publicly embraced Catholic religion while cracking down on militancy, and outlawed the UNS in 1944.[30] Ávila Camacho's policies ultimately led to the group's fracture and disappearance.

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[26] Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity*, 150; and Meyer, "Religious Conflict and Catholic Resistance," 197.
[27] Knight, "The End of the Mexican Revolution?", 59–60; and Rath, "Conscription, Recalcitrance and Resistance," 517, n. 45.
[28] Knight, "The End of the Mexican Revolution?", 60.
[29] Rath, "Conscription, Recalcitrance and Resistance," 517–519.
[30] Knight, "The End of the Mexican Revolution?", 60.

Nonetheless, the Catholic Church continues to be a viable political and social actor in Mexico today. At the national level, the Mexican government has reconciled itself with the Church. Pres. Carlos Salinas de Gortari re-established formal relations with the Vatican in 1992, nearly 125 years after diplomatic ties broke down in the mid nineteenth century. And the National Action Party (PAN), which came to power in the 2000 elections and ruled until 2012, has ideological roots in both the sinarquista movement and the Catholic Action Party of the early twentieth century.

But most importantly, much of the population in Mexico today continues to structure daily life around a religious framework. For some, devotion centers on regional virgins, such as Talpa in Nayarit and rural Jalisco, Zapopan in Guadalajara, Pueblito in Querétaro, and Juquila in Oaxaca, or broader national icons such as Guadalupe. The Santo Niño de Atocha, in turn, welcomes a wandering migrant population.[31] But a disaffected population too accustomed to danger and violence is behind the most recent religious innovations.

For some, la Santa Muerte offers a macabre solace. Her faithful claim she has roots in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican culture. But her current popularity has less to do with any historical value, and much more to do with her appeal for gang members who seek a patron of their violent exploits. Authorities have found Santa Muerte icons at the scenes of cartel-related crimes, and some cartel members have allegedly performed ritual sacrifices for the saint.[32] But devotion to la

[31] Pescador, *Crossing Borders*.
[32] "Zetas realizan sacrificios humanos en honor a la Santa Muerte," *Univisión*, 25 Jan. 2012, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://uni.vi/3hNFLA.

Santa Muerte retains a fundamentally Catholic structure, although she is not recognized by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Her "bishop" in Tepito, a Mexico City slum, has erected a church in her honor and celebrates Mass complete with the Eucharist.[33]

Other religious innovations draw from a charismatic Protestant Christianity recently on the rise in Mexico.[34] Until his violent death earlier this year, Nazario Moreno functioned as the head of Michoacán-based La Familia cartel, but also served as the group's high priest. Moreno, "el Más Loco," reportedly drew inspiration from the writings of evangelical Christian author John Eldredge, who advocates a more macho faith for Christian men.[35] La Familia funded certain evangelical churches in Mexico and distributed popular Protestant versions of the Bible. And Moreno self-published his own collection of *Pensamientos* ("Thoughts"), filled with anodyne musings such as, "I ask God for strength and he gives me challenges that make me strong; I ask him for wisdom and he gives me problems to resolve; I ask him for prosperity and he gives me brain and muscles to work."[36] Most significantly, La Familia's propaganda campaign took pains

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[33] Grillo, *El Narco*, 192–193.
[34] For Pentecostalism in Mexico, see De la Luz, *El movimiento pentecostal en México*; and Vallverdú, *Las lenguas del espíritu*.
[35] Grillo, *El Narco*, 197. Speaking of the "westward expansion against the masculine soul," Eldredge complains that "society [has] spent the last thirty years redefining masculinity into something more sensitive, safe, manageable and, well, feminine." Instead, "[a] man needs a battle to fight; he needs a place for the warrior in him to come alive […] if we can reawaken that fierce quality in a man, hook it up to a higher purpose, release the warrior within, then the boy can grow up and become truly masculine." *Wild at Heart*, 8, 6, 140. Eldredge's book has been translated into Spanish as *Salvaje de Corazón*.
[36] Grillo, *El Narco*, 198. Translation is Grillo's. Moreno, of course, also carried his faith far afield from evangelicalism. Under his spiritual guidance, members of La Familia tortured and killed opponents, and became one of the fastest-growing drug-trafficking organizations in Mexico until his demise. Since his death, the cartel has splintered. Those who retained the brand La Familia have developed a protection racket on Mexico City's outskirts, while the more zealous among Moreno's followers formed the Knights Templar cartel under a similar religious mission.

to present the cartel as a positive force in Mexican society. Cartel members condemned common delinquency such as "express" kidnappings, rape, and murder, and publicly punished those who perpetrate such crimes. In Michoacán, in fact, vigilantism has now become rampant as numerous other "self-defense" organizations have subsequently arisen to combat delinquency. Well-armed with Kalashnikov rifles, these groups are fighting against each other and the cartel in a self-proclaimed battle over who has ultimate moral authority.

For its part, the clergy continues to engage with this population at a fundamental level, continually reframing the escalating violence and fringe religious devotions as part of a broader battle between good and evil. Perhaps the most salient form of this engagement is the proliferation of exorcisms performed in urban and rural parishes across the country. In May 2013, the head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture condemned the Santa Muerte cult as a form of "anti-religion."[37] That same month, a video taken during Mass in St. Peter's Square depicted a Mexican man convulsing and slumping in his wheelchair after Pope Francis laid his hands on the man. The priest who accompanied the man from Mexico claimed his parishioner was possessed by the devil, and the pope had said a prayer to liberate the victim. While the Vatican was at pains to explain that Francis "didn't intend to perform any exorcism," to many Mexicans, this was merely a semantic dispute.[38] Various news agencies subsequently reported a rise in exorcisms performed in Mexico. It is not yet clear who is demanding the rite, but some priests point to repentant cartel members. Pbto. Ernesto Caro, the resident exorcist of the Diocese

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[37] "Vatican Declares Mexican Death Saint Blasphemous," *BBC News*, 9 May 2013, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22462181.
[38] "Exorcist Says Pope Helped 'Liberate' Man," *New York Times*, 21 May 2013, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/world/europe/exorcist-says-pope-helped-liberate-man.html?smid=pl-share.

of Monterrey, claimed earlier this year that, until four years ago, he had never exorcised demons from a trafficker. But now, "evil is growing."[39]

While there is little data on the phenomenon, exorcism seems to be a widespread practice. Numerous reports from late 2013 and early 2014 cited exorcisms in urban areas such as Veracruz, Mexico City, and Monterrey, and add that the practice is also popular in rural parishes.[40] Demand for exorcisms has remained high enough until now that the ecclesiastical hierarchy has begun training bishops and priests to handle the practice. Msgr. Sante Babolin, an exorcism expert from Padua, Italy, led a seminar in Mexico City this past summer for 40 prelates. While Babolin explained that authentic demon possession was rare—he claimed that only 2.4 percent of supplicants were truly possessed—the Church is nevertheless acceding to demand. As of July 2014, 90 priests in Mexico were equipped to perform exorcisms, at least one in each diocese.[41]

Overall, while the religious landscape in Mexico has changed dramatically since 1867, it has remained at the forefront of social and political change. It is difficult to overstate the significance of religion throughout modern Mexican history when millions of Mexicans still continue to situate their actions, and the actions of their government and its enemies within a Christian framework. Even organizations as unlikely as drug cartels use a Christian morality to gain

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[39] Deborah Hastings, "Exorcism Rituals on the Rise as Way to Battle Evil of Mexican Cartels," *New York Daily News*, 17 January 2014, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://nydn.us/19vlPPU.
[40] See, for example, Vladimir Hernández, "The Country Where Exorcisms Are on the Rise," *BBC Mundo*, 25 Nov. 2013, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25032305.
[41] Blanca Juárez, "Darán curso de exorcismo a 40 obispos mexicanos," *La Jornada*, 21 July 2014, accessed 17 Oct. 2014, http://shar.es/1mADu3.

legitimacy in the eyes of the non-trafficking population at large. Seen in this light, the period from 1750 to 1850 does not represent the end of the Church's influence in Mexican society. Nor does it represent the beginning of a trajectory in which the religious and civil spheres have slowly separated from each other. On the contrary, that period instead represents the initiation of a process in which Mexicans—both lay and clerical—have fought and negotiated to determine who offers the path to the divine.

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