

I

Mestizo Towns

I Politics

Mexico first experienced constitutional government under Spanish rule, though at a time when the War of Independence (1810–1821) was well underway. The 1812 Spanish Constitution, written in Cádiz by a liberal assembly that included delegates from the empire's overseas territories, stated in article 248: "In common, civil, and criminal affairs, there will be no more than one single jurisdiction for any class of persons."¹ At a stroke the legal distinctions that for centuries had defined imperial social relations were abolished; only members of the Church and the army would be able to hold on to their accustomed prerogatives. Concretely, the constitution located the operation of legal sovereignty in a hierarchy of judicial institutions that on the lowest level, where it would be encountered by the majority of citizens, was represented by the mayor (*alcalde*) and other members of the town council (*ayuntamiento*).² In charging municipal governments with the protection of a new civic equality, the Cádiz Constitution set a precedent that Latin America's post-independence republics would eagerly follow.³

1 "En los negocios comunes, civiles y criminales, no habrá más que un solo fuero para toda clase de personas." *Constitución política de la monarquía española: Promulgada en Cádiz a 19 de marzo de 1812* (Cádiz: Imprenta Real, 1812), articles 248–250. Quote from article 248.

2 *Constitución política de la monarquía española*, article 275.

3 The study of the institutional impact of the Cádiz Constitution on Mexican state formation goes back to Nettie Lee Benson, *The Provincial Deputation in Mexico: Harbinger of Provincial Autonomy, Independence, and Federalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992 [1955]). Important subsequent works include Virginia Guedea, "The Process of Mexican Independence," *American Historical Review* 105/1 (2000); Antonio Annino, "Soberanías en lucha" and "Pueblos, liberalismo, y nación en México," in *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica. Siglo XIX*, eds. Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra, 152–184 and 399–430 (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003); and "The Two-Faced Janus: The Pueblos and the Origins of Mexican Liberalism," in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*, eds. Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino, 60–90 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); and the essays collected in Juan Ortiz Escamilla and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (eds.), *Ayuntamientos y liberalismo gaditano*

In colonial Latin America, town councils had been formed in urban centers with enough wealthy, creole (Spanish-descended) inhabitants to occupy all positions of government. The Cádiz Constitution, by contrast, demanded the installation of town councils in all towns with more than a thousand inhabitants as well as in smaller settlements “in which their existence is advisable.”⁴ In Mexico the consequences of this provision were profound. In regions with large indigenous majorities, like Oaxaca, it meant that constitutional municipalities were to take the place of indigenous *repúblicas* (corporate governments), creating a uniformity of local political institutions across the country’s principal ethnic division. In ethnically mixed regions, like much of San Luis Potosí, it meant that populations who used to arrange their affairs through separate administrative channels would have to participate in a single legal and political framework.⁵ And in regions with predominantly mestizo populations, it meant that local governments sprang up in places where none had existed before. In Guanajuato there were seven town governments in 1800, nine after 1804, and twenty-three by the early 1820s, when the Cádiz Constitution had begun to be followed.⁶ Settlements that had previously been governed from afar, as dependencies of bigger, wealthier towns, for the first time became independent administrative seats.

The realization that a large share of responsibility for the construction of a post-colonial Mexican state rested with people whose main theater of action was the municipality has made the study of local political cultures a central task for historians of the period. How did small-town residents evaluate the nature of their bond to the polity at large? What implications did their ideas have for the construction of a liberal republic? One way in which historians have approached these questions has been to analyze the cultural and intellectual traditions by which local actors understood the

en México (Zamora and Xalapa: El Colegio de Michoacán and Universidad Veracruzana, 2007); and in *Cabildos, Repúblicas y Ayuntamientos Constitucionales en la Independencia de México*, eds. Moisés Guzmán Pérez (Morelia: Comisión institucional para la conmemoración del bicentenario de la independencia y el centenario de la revolución mexicana, 2009). For discussions of the importance of the Cádiz Constitution for the Spanish American independence process as a whole, see Jaime Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Roberto Breña, *El primer liberalismo español y los procesos de emancipación de América, 1808–1824* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2006).

4 “[E]n que convenga que haya.” *Constitución política de la monarquía española*, article 310.

5 Juan Carlos Sánchez Montiel, “Nuevos ayuntamientos y reformulación de la representación política: San Luis Potosí, 1812–1835,” PhD dissertation, Instituto de Investigaciones Doctor José María Luis Mora (2007), 124–130.

6 José Antonio Serrano Ortega, *Jerarquía territorial y transición política: Guanajuato, 1790–1836* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 2001), 147.

changes they lived through. By way of carefully contextualized reconstructions of instances of anti-Spanish violence in the first years of Mexico's independence war, Eric Van Young has shown that larger ideas associated with the liberal Enlightenment and to some extent present in the programs of insurgent leaders and Spanish liberals in Cádiz, like national sovereignty or legal equality, were often far from the minds of the rural poor who killed and rioted under their banners. For example, in November 1810 crowds from the mestizo town of Atlacomulco and the nearby indigenous hamlet of San Juan de los Jarros broke into the home of a Spanish-born merchant and killed him together with his son, his son-in-law, and his estate administrator. This merchant had in previous decades accumulated land in the area, making enemies of peasants on whose fields he was encroaching. According to Van Young, in such an instance of popular violence the objective of rebels or rioters was nothing as distant as national independence or the establishment of a constitutional republic. Rather, peasants took advantage of the chaos of war to attack those they considered their enemies: land-usurping hacendados, abusive state officials, Spaniards, the local rich.⁷ What was ultimately at stake for them was "the continued political viability of peasant communities and their existence as substantially autonomous producers of local ethnic culture."⁸ Van Young suggests that much of the participation of the rural poor in the War of Independence was attributable to similar motives.

The idea that in Mexico most local interests were barely touched by liberal and nationalist strands of thinking has also been influential in scholarship on the post-colonial period. For example, Antonio Annino has argued that after independence Mexicans' political loyalties continued to belong to their municipalities before they belonged to the nation. Political sovereignty, according to a common understanding going back to the colonial period, resided not in an abstract nation but was territorially anchored in the corporate bodies of the municipalities. Annino argues that instability in nineteenth-century Mexico was largely a result of this early modern understanding of politics. Small-town actors allied themselves with military insurgents, and declared the national contract broken, whenever they thought that the central government was infringing on their autonomy.⁹

Van Young and Annino emphasize the tensions between locally shaped values and the demands of a liberal polity – between peasants for whom

7 Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), chapters 15–17.

8 Eric Van Young, "Agrarian Rebellion and Defense of Community: Meaning and Collective Violence in Late-Colonial and Independence-Era Mexico," *Journal of Social History* 27/2 (1993), 249.

9 Annino, "Soberanías en lucha" and "Pueblos, liberalismo, y nación," esp. 168–177 and 410–414; and "The Two-Faced Janus."

politics was a field of established reciprocities and cosmopolitan lawmakers for whom it was a means for implementing exalted ideas. Other historians have developed a less skeptical view about peasants' interest in the political universe outside their towns or villages. In regional studies of the states of Guerrero and Veracruz, Peter Guardino and Michael Ducey examine political culture not as a reservoir of habits but as an evolving set of practices and expectations.¹⁰ Guardino and Ducey highlight the dispersion of liberal ideas of citizenship and show that - whatever the resilience of the cultural and ideational systems described by Van Young and Annino - municipal politics underwent dramatic changes under the impact of national events like the War of Independence. Ordinary citizens not only adapted the categories of elite liberal discourse to their own interests but participated in cross-class and cross-regional coalitions that allowed them to project those interests into the arena of national politics. They took active and, sometimes, instrumental roles in the policy disputes occupying the country's political classes - disputes about land reform, trade policy, taxation, or the treatment of Spaniards still residing in Mexico. While peasant demands were typically mediated by regional strongmen like Juan Alvarez of Guerrero or Mariano Olarte of Veracruz, they were united both by a common set of grievances and by a common idiom through which to express them. If we treat "class" as a discursive construction rather than an ontological presence - as a result, in the phrase of Gareth Stedman Jones, of "the production of interest, identification, grievance and aspiration within political languages themselves" - then it is hard not to understand the politics of post-colonial Mexico as at least partly a class struggle.¹¹ And to the extent that people in different parts of the country understood their grievances and interests through a common language of class it becomes possible to describe not only the many local histories but the national history of nineteenth-century Mexico from their perspective.

There were, in particular, two moments when varieties of class-based struggles pushed clearly defined policy initiatives onto Mexico's national stage. The first of these came in 1829 and coincided with the populist presidency of Vicente Guerrero. Confronted with a Spanish invasion attempt, the Guerrero administration gave in to popular pressure and ordered the expulsion of all Spaniards from the country. Apart from its immediate context, the initiative, like a similar though weaker expulsion bill that had been passed two years earlier, was prompted by the widespread

10 Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Making of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800–1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Michael Ducey, *A Nation of Villages: Riot and Rebellion in the Mexican Huasteca, 1750–1850* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

11 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 8, 22.

perception that Spaniards, often the richest people in town, continued to dominate the economy through their control of the commercial sector.¹² In the first decade and a half after independence, perhaps three-quarters of Mexico's Spaniards were forced to leave the country due to various expulsion laws passed at the state and federal levels, of which the 1829 law was the most effective.¹³

A second broad, class-based movement began in the 1840s when peasants in various parts of the country – Guerrero, Morelos, the Sierra Gorda, the Huasteca region – started rebellions or became embroiled in rebellion-like skirmishes with haciendas they accused of usurping land or exploiting workers and tenants. Pacified by a mixture of force and concessions, many rebels once more took up arms in the Revolution of Ayutla, which in 1855 overthrew a short-lived conservative dictatorship. In the revolution's aftermath, peasant rebels found spokesmen in social liberals like Ponciano Arriaga, who presented a detailed program for agrarian reform to the 1856–1857 Constituent Congress.¹⁴ In this case, too, popular demands with an important class dimension, though first articulated in dispersed mobilizations and rebellions, achieved enough collective force to attract a national audience and, through the use of political intermediaries, to influence national debates and policy schemes.

But the most vital issue around which local actors mobilized again and again in early republican Mexico was the defense of the municipality as an independent political space. Here, the findings of Guardino and Ducey converge with those of Van Young and Annino. Before the reform-era civil wars, Mexico's political culture organized loyalties around two basic constitutional options. A federalist constitution, in effect from 1824 to 1835 and again from 1846 to 1853, devolved a great deal of power to the states and, within the states, to the municipalities. This constitution relied on near-universal male suffrage in order to fill local, regional, and national

12 Silvia Arrom, "Popular Politics in Mexico City: The Parian Riot, 1828," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68/2 (1988), 257–263; Guardino, *Peasants*, 115–119, 122–123, 127, and *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750–1850* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 183–86, 204–205; Ducey, *Nation of Villages*, 132–133; Rosalina Ríos Zúñiga, "Popular Uprising and Political Culture in Zacatecas: The Sombrerete Uprisings (1829)," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87/3 (2007), 504–509, 518–519, 524, 529–530, 534; Margaret Chowning, *Wealth and Power in Provincial Mexico: Michoacán from the Late Colony to the Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 131–133.

13 Harold Dana Sims, *The Expulsion of Mexico's Spaniards, 1821–1836* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 6.

14 John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750–1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 249–258; Leticia Reina, "The Sierra Gorda Peasant Rebellion, 1847–50," in *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico*, eds. Friedrich Katz, 269–294 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Guardino, *Peasants*, 191–209. Ducey, *Nation of Villages*, 145–158, 165–167.

government posts. By contrast, two centralist constitutions, in effect from 1836 to 1846 and again from 1853 to 1855, concentrated power in Mexico City, arranged for regional and local government posts to be filled by appointment, and limited voting rights to people with property or significant incomes. Apart from elite groups based in Mexico City and a few large provincial towns, the military was the strongest supporter of centralism and provided the system with a country-wide institutional base. But the majority of Mexicans viewed centralism as an attack on municipal freedom – even, Ducey writes, “a neocolonial project” – and resisted it fiercely.¹⁵ By confirming the local focus of ordinary Mexicans’ political commitments, regional studies of popular political culture complicate the class-based assessment of Mexico’s post-colonial state that they also invite.

Must we conclude that Mexican popular actors launched their most important interventions in national politics only to protect old, corporate solidarities, even if they used a liberal vocabulary to do so? In this book I would like to explore a different possibility. Rather than study the way in which towns were involved in national political struggles, I would like to explore how national ideologies found traction in municipal politics. To do this it is necessary to consider provincial towns not just as repositories of local interests and identities but as centers of social and political life in their own right. And it is necessary to do this not just in times of heightened tension, such as the Guerrero presidency or the peasant wars of the 1840s, but also in times of social and political tranquility. If most Mexicans supported the federalist form of government, what did federalism mean to them, not in their relationship to a distant center of power but in their relationship to their neighbors and fellow citizens, and not as a political slogan but as a day-to-day framework of life?

In this and the following chapter, I will ask this question of the inhabitants of mestizo towns in Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí. I am using the term “mestizo towns” as a shorthand for municipal townships that did not carry on indigenous corporate traditions, even where indigenous people made up a substantial part of their population, as was often the case in San Luis Potosí. Mestizo towns had often been founded to take advantage of ecological and geological niches: the mineral deposits of the Sierra de Guanajuato, Sierra de Catorce, and other mountain ranges, or the fertile agricultural land of the Bajío basin, which made Guanajuato into one of the colony’s principal areas of wheat, corn, and livestock production and, over time, gave rise to subsidiary leather and textile industries. Mestizo towns tended to be ethnically diverse and, compared to other settlement types, socially fluid. They thus lacked the sharpness of definition by which both indigenous towns and haciendas had been fixed in place in the political and imaginative

15 Ducey, *Nation of Villages*, 172.

edifice of colonial rule: the first as wards of the Crown in need of guidance and protection, the second as symbols and, often enough, realizations of settler dominance, opulence, and independence. In mestizo towns, inequality and privilege had been less firmly rendered into the formal structure of life.

This does not mean that in these places the federalist system was universally accepted. Federalist ideals were challenged both by an old class of patrician elites, who had dominated town politics in the colonial period, and by a new class of soldiers and officers who continued to enjoy colonial-era immunities under the jurisdiction of the *fuero militar*. In the clashes local federalists fought with these adversaries, their ideas acquired sharpness and definition, allowing us to discern – as it were from the outside – some of the vital realities that, beyond the protection of local solidarities, were at stake in local mobilizations for a federalist constitutional project.

II Soldiers

The Mexican army was a formidable adversary of legal rule in nineteenth-century Mexico. Old-regime Spain, like other countries in early modern Europe, had been crisscrossed by an assortment of special legal statuses that limited the application of the ordinary royal jurisdiction, the *fuero real ordinario*. In the eighteenth century, at least thirty-four privileged jurisdictions had existed, including “those of the military, the clergy, the corporations of merchants, and the mining industry.” These *fueros* or jurisdictions, Lyle McAlister writes, had been “the juridical expression of a society in which the state was regarded not as a community of citizens enjoying equal rights and responsibilities, but as a structure built of classes and corporations, each with a unique and peculiar function to perform.”¹⁶ In colonial Mexico, the formal division between conquerors and conquered had added a further dimension of jurisdictional complexity to this situation.¹⁷

In the course of the eighteenth century, New Spain’s legal pluralism was increasingly called into question. Spain’s so-called Bourbon reforms were, among other things, attempts to reduce the reach of special jurisdictions and streamline the Empire’s judicial apparatus. Designed to enhance the power of the Crown against other, rival sources of authority,

16 Lyle McAlister, *The ‘Fuero Militar’ in New Spain 1764–1800* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1957), 5–6. See pp. 5–12 for McAlister’s full discussion of the various types of *fueros* in Spain and colonial Mexico. See also Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43–45.

17 The classic account of Spanish attempts to come to grips with the legal implications of its New World conquests is Silvio Zavala, *Las instituciones jurídicas en la conquista de América*, 3rd ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1988 [1935]).

they also addressed a need to simplify adjudication procedures in cases that crossed jurisdictional boundaries – a need becoming more urgent with the growing volume of interactions between different social and cultural groups.¹⁸ But the Bourbon attempt to create a more unitary state existed alongside short-term policy objectives that muted much of its impact. Thus, the same geopolitical debility that partly motivated Spain's imperial reforms made it paramount for the Empire to raise a credible army in its overseas territories. At the end of the colonial period the army, strengthened in number and insisting on its legal prerogatives, clashed more and more often with civilian authorities.¹⁹ And while the Bourbon project of concentrating legal sovereignty in a unitary state found its final fulfillment after Mexico's independence from Spain, the special jurisdiction of the army, together with that of the Church, survived the transition to republican rule.

Because the *fuero militar* removed soldiers from the claims of civilian justice, it threatened to undermine the rule of law wherever soldiers and civilians shared social space together. In the early republican period the abuses – sometimes the outright crimes – committed by soldiers were among town councils' most intractable problems. In Villa de la Soledad, two soldiers beat up a butcher on the grounds that he had refused to debone a piece of meat he was selling; the mayor of Villa de la Soledad managed to arrest one of the assailants but had to surrender his prisoner to a sergeant, who claimed him as one of his men, a few minutes later.²⁰ In Villa de Valle, a soldier injured a civilian; authorities were unable to arrest him as he had found protection in the house of an officer. "No delinquent in these towns," the mayor wrote to the governor of San Luis Potosí in 1825, "in order to exonerate himself from punishment for his offences needs to do anything but to be an *urbano* [soldier in the urban militia]."²¹ Civilian authorities who refused to surrender offending soldiers to their officers might be made to do so by force: in 1825 the military commander José María Terán broke into Aquismón's town jail and liberated a soldier who had been imprisoned for committing unnamed "excesses."²²

18 Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*.

19 A process described in detail in McAlister, '*Fuero Militar*' in *New Spain*. On civilian-military conflicts in late-colonial Mexico, see also Christon Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico, 1760–1810* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 16, 125–128, 171–175, 181–185.

20 Letter from Pantaleón Trujillo, Villa de la Soledad, 30 May 1835, in AHESLP-SGG, Caja 530, Expediente without number.

21 "Ningún delincuente en estos pueblos . . . necesita de otra cosa para exonerarse de la pena de sus delitos, que de ser urbano." José María González to Gobernador, Villa de Valle, 6 June 1825, in AHESLP-SGG, Caja 17, Expediente 8, Folios 8–9. The urban militia in 1825 was probably a holdover from the War of Independence and had at any rate not yet been brought under civilian control as it would be a few years later.

22 Juan José Velarde to Gobernador, Tancanhuitz, 7 April 1825, in AHESLP-SGG, Caja 17, Expediente 10, Fojas 1–3.

Not only ordinary soldiers were guilty of abuses. Often enough men on the higher rungs of the military hierarchy themselves violated the rights of their fellow-citizens. Town authorities were then reduced to reporting the issue to the governor of their state and awaiting whatever remedial action he, in turn, might be able to secure from the commandant general of the army. Such reports describe a broad range of misbehaviors: an officer who nearly whipped to death a worker on his estate; another who, bypassing the channels of civil law, settled a land dispute through simple occupation; another who, upon learning that his brother had been jailed, in the dark of night appeared before the house of the responsible mayor, uttering threats and curses; another who sent his soldiers to break into and search the houses of citizens whom he suspected of having stolen corn from his field.²³ To those affected by this behavior, it was little consolation that military judges by and large decided cases professionally and without corporate bias.²⁴ Military courts existed only in the *comandancias generales*, or army headquarters, located in state capitals, and were no realistic means of redress for most people suffering the abusive behavior of officers and soldiers.

The misbehavior of soldiers remained manageable as long as it consisted of instances that could be addressed, coped with, or even grudgingly ignored on a case-by-case basis. From the point of view of municipal authorities, worse than the inability to punish specific offences was the general erosion of legal standards wherever soldiers appeared in public. “Equality before the law,” wrote the mayor of Dolores Hidalgo, “cannot allow that in the society of a peaceful town there are privileged citizens dedicated to maintaining themselves, working, and living side by side with others who do not enjoy such favors, because [in such a case] there could never be peace, harmony, or happiness.”²⁵ The mayor of Xilitla in 1825

23 José María de Ayala y Soto to Gobernador, Pénjamo, 4 July 1834, in AGEJ-J, Caja 23, Expediente 5; Mariano Rodríguez to Gobernador, Pénjamo, 9 October 1835, in AGEJ-J Caja 25, Expediente 7; Luis Ramírez to Gobernador and Comandante General, Romita, 16 September 1839, in AGEJ-J Caja 35, Expediente 13; Manuel Juncal to Gobernador, Yuriria, 19 November 1826, in AGEJ-M Caja 28, Expediente 2. For further examples of reported abuses by military officers, see Rafael García to Gobernador, Silao, 8 December 1830, in AGEJ-J, Caja 14, Expediente 14. “Noticia de los puntos que há tratado el Ylustre Ayuntamiento de Xichú en sus acuerdos del presente mês,” 30 June 1827, in AGEJ-M Caja 38, Expediente 16. José María Fernández to Gobernador, San Felipe, 23 July 1836, in AGEJ-G Caja 66, Expediente 6.

24 Linda Arnold, “Privileged Justice? The *Fuero Militar* in Early National Mexico,” in *Judicial Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. Eduardo Zimmermann, 49–4 (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999).

25 “La igualdad ante la ley no puede permitir que en la sociedad de un pueblo pacífico haya ciudadanos privilegiados dedicados a mantenerse, a trabajar, y a vivir unidos a otros que no gozan tales gracias, porque nunca habría paz, armonía, ni felicidad . . .” José Agustín Villegas to Gobernador, Dolores Hidalgo, 27 August 1824, in AGEJ-G, Caja 2, Expediente 3.

complained about four town residents who, after joining the company commanded by José María Terán, let it be known “that being soldiers of the said company they wouldn’t have to respect anyone in the town; that the *ayuntamiento* to them would be nothing.” Lately, one of the offenders had taken to running through the streets and challenging the authorities, saber in hand.²⁶ The mayor of Salamanca also reported that “[v]arious individuals,” protected by the military *fuero*, “are guilty of misconduct, which although I notice I cannot correct since if I do so I expose my authority and compromise [public] tranquility; because the *aforados* [people covered by the military *fuero*] say that the mayors are not their judges.”²⁷ The mayor of Bizcocho simply complained about “the repeated scandals that those in the military commit” under cover of their *fuero*.²⁸ Such complaints tell us a lot about the kind of legal order that town governments thought it was their task to protect. They insisted on equality as the fundamental principle of republican law. From their point of view, the *fuero militar* removed wrongdoers and criminals, if not from all accountability then from any legal process that through its neutrality might vindicate the rights of those who had suffered harm and the authority of the laws that had been violated.

Two instances of conflict shed special light on the structural tension between civilian authorities and members of the military in post-colonial Mexico. One Sunday night in August 1826, a municipal patrol in Villa de la Soledad, San Luis Potosí, came upon a dance [*fandango*] hosted by the soldier Lugardo Mesquitic.²⁹ As they walked past his house, members of the patrol saw that Mesquitic was attempting to force his sister-in-law to dance with him. When the woman resisted her kinsman became aggressive, demanding to know on whose orders she refused him a dance. The patrol intervened and a violent scuffle ensued in which Mesquitic injured two officers and a female bystander with a knife. Mesquitic’s companions meanwhile fought with other members of the patrol. The story ends the way many such stories ended, with the offender arrested and jailed – it is not clear whether during the confrontation or at a later time – and his superiors demanding his surrender.

26 Tomás Chávez [to Gobernador], Xilitla, 20 April 1825, in AHESLP-SGG, Caja 15, Expediente 22, Foja 2.

27 “Varios individuos . . . cometen algunas faltas, que aunque yo las advierto, no puedo corregirlas, porque de hacerlo, tanto expongo mi autoridad, como comprometo la tranquilidad; pues dicen los aforados que no son sus jueces los alcaldes. . . .” Marcelo Estrada to Gobernador, Salamanca, 16 May 1827, in AGEG-G, Caja 14, Expediente 7.

28 “[L]os repetidos escándalos que cometen los militares.” Manuel Ignacio de Caballero to Secretario del Gobierno, San Miguel de Allende, 10 October 1847, in AGEG-G, Caja 82, Expediente 1.

29 José María Santuján to Gobernador, Soledad, 23 August 1826, in AHESLP-SGG, Caja 56, Expediente 5, Fojas 4–5.