Confraternities and Popular Conservatism on the Frontier: Mexico's Sierra del Nayarit in the Nineteenth Century

K. Aaron Van Oosterhout

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> I've passed two frightful years due to this same gang, and was even robbed by them," wrote the 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.[1]

During the nine months prior to the writing of 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. Some 400 pesos had been gained from the forced sale of their lay brotherhood's property, and they wanted the money so they could buy back the land.[2] By August 1857, however, the parishioners' 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.[3] Thus it likely came as little surprise when 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 that 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.

I thank Benjamin Smith and the anonymous reviewers and editorial board of *The Americas* for their comments on the various drafts of this article. I also thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for funding my research in Mexico.

1. Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de Guadalajara [hereafter AHAG], Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, September 29, 1857. All translations are mine.
2. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 25, April 20, 1852.
3. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, January 24, 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).

But within two years, the situation was reversed. Lozada became a leading commander in the pro-Church forces during the Reform War, redirecting widespread rebellion into support for clerical privilege and Catholic exclusivity while becoming the Church's principal benefactor in the region. Martínez, meanwhile, established a close rapport with the former gang leader, frequently traveling unaccompanied to Lozada's hometown of San Luis in order to "personally keep the peace."[4] What had changed? Why did parishioners in Santa María del Oro at first rebel against their priest, then give their lives to defend the Church for the next two decades? What was the nature of their relationship with the Church and its clergy before rebellion?

The episode between Martínez and his rebellious parishioners offers a window into the nature of popular Conservatism on the frontier of the nineteenth-century Sierra del Nayarit. At first glance, rebel behavior in the region appears merely pragmatic and self-serving, as parishioners apparently had little trouble alternating between persecuting and supporting the local priest. And Manuel Lozada was certainly an unlikely paladin for the Church. While some priests aided the former outlaw, either by stationing themselves in his hometown or providing him with arms, Lozada's relationship with the clergy was typically strained. Indeed, as Martínez discovered, it was the priests' aggressive interventions in the lay brotherhoods of Nayarit that provided the catalyst for rebellion and sent fighters into Lozada's ranks in the mid 1850s.

Such ambivalence has led many scholars to dismiss popular adherence to Conservatism as reactionary, or the result of Liberal ineptitude in capitalizing on peasant angst.[5] But, on the contrary, rebels in Nayarit displayed a remarkably coherent worldview when negotiating with Church and state authorities. This worldview elevated religion—particularly the local control of religious property and worship—above all else. Moreover, it drew on a long tradition of negotiation between the clergy and their flock in the region. Between 1700 and 1850, priests and parishioners alternated between amicable bargaining and violent struggle to shape the Church. These negotiations centered on confraternities, or lay brotherhoods dedicated to a saint or devotion that held land and livestock in common. Put another way, a spiritual economy had developed on the frontier. In this economy, confraternity property was the currency that paid for Masses, church upkeep, and the needs of individual *cofrades* (confraternity members). And cofrades and clergy

4. AHAG, Gob., Parrs., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, September 6, 1859. Martínez's successor, Fr. Cosme Santa Anna, would also parley with Lozada. AHAG, Gob., Parrs., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, January 20, 1865.

5. Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 94.

frequently wrestled over how that currency was spent.[6] In short, popular Conservatism in Nayarit was the defense of the village's spiritual economy.

In order to examine priest-parishioner debates and their eventual politicization, this essay responds to and builds upon three literatures—those of agrarian revolt, nineteenth-century Conservatism, and lay-clerical relations. First, scholars tend to reject any religious motivation for Lozada's rebellion and instead identify agrarian concerns as the raison d'être of the movement. Disregarding earlier works from the late nineteenth century, which characterized Lozada and his fighters as "fanatical" brigands, most studies from the mid twentieth century onward perceive any supposed defense of religion and the Church as a mere epiphenomenal façade, emblematic of a superficial marriage of convenience between peasant fighters and Tepic elites.[7] 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.[8] Although Jean Meyer presents a more nuanced interpretation and allows for some degree of religious motivation, he too eventually arrives at an agrarian interpretation after finding an unbridgeable spiritual gulf between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the rebels.[9] Most recently, Zachary Brittsan has provided a cohesive narrative to Lozada's movement, and has begun to uncover evidence that the rebels' alliance with the Church during the Reform War and Second Empire was born of a mutual understanding.[10] Nevertheless, due partly to an emphasis on Lozada himself, the literature thus far has broadly ignored the spiritual framework constructed over the centuries before the 1850s. Viewed in light of this framework, Lozada's negotiations with the clergy grew out of a longstanding tradition of priest-parishioner compromise.

6. For "spiritual economy," I draw on the adapted concept of E. P. Thompson's "moral economy," as elaborated by Benjamin Smith and Kevin Gosner on the Mixteca Baja and the Yucatán, respectively. See *The Roots of Conservatism in Mexico: Catholicism, Society, and Politics in the Mixteca Baja, 1750–1962* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), pp. 7–8; and *Soldiers of the Virgin: The Moral Economy of a Colonial Maya Rebellion* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992).

7. Mario 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 Rendón, *La rebelión agraria de Manuel Lozada: 1873* (Mexico: CONAFE, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1983), p. 71. For an example of the late-nineteenth-century literature, see Salvador Quevedo y Zubieta, *México: recuerdos de un emigrado* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1883), pp. 83–85.

8. Silvano Barba González characterized Lozada and the Revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata as "authentic and fierce defenders of Mexican agriculture." Barba González, *La lucha por la tierra: vol. 1, Manuel Lozada* (Mexico: Barba González, 1956), p. 109.

9. Jean Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada* (Mexico: CONACYT, 1984), pp. 126, 146–160.

10. Zachary Brittsan, "Not for Lack of Faith: State, Church, and Popular Politics in Midcentury Tepic," paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies, Park City, Utah, March 30, 2012, pp. 2, 9–13. Brittsan's two-part argument—composed of both a negative "push" from liberals and a positive "pull" to conservatives—finds its analogue in Guy Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla, 1854–1886," in *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX*, Will Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno, eds. (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1999), pp. 243–244.

Second, some historians have begun to take a closer look at nineteenth-century Conservatism at the national level, but the local level remains largely untouched. Erika Pani, for example, along with Brian Hamnett, Will Fowler, Humberto Morales Moreno, and Brian Connaughton, have re-examined the role played by the "bad guys of the story."[11] 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 that mid-century luminaries were genuinely interested in stabilizing the country after decades of war and territorial disintegration. Fowler, for instance, details how Conservative thought adapted in response to Liberal reformers' socially disruptive attacks on "traditional values" and the chronic instability of the federalist system.[12] And Connaughton examines how the ecclesiastical hierarchy worked to construct a "Catholic nation" in order to foster unity, even as many members of the lower clergy publicly attacked the corporate Church.[13] But despite the excellent work done thus far, popular support for Conservatism remains largely unexamined. Pani suggests historians not pursue an inflexible definition of the protean "Mexican Conservatism," but rather disentangle "the complexities of the political dynamic … in order to discover what was in play" in that era.[14] Much remains to be done in this regard. 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.[15]

Benjamin Smith has begun this work of discovery in Oaxaca's Mixteca Baja, where he finds that centuries-long alliances between clergy and village *caciques*

11. Edmundo O'Gorman, *La supervivencia política novohispana: reflexiones sobre el monarquismo mexicano* (Mexico: CONDUMEX, 1969), p. 5. See also Erika Pani, ed. *Conservadurismo y derechas en la historia de México* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009); Brian Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives, Clericals, and Soldiers: The 'Traitor' Tomás Mejía through Reform and Empire, 1855–1867," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20:2 (2001), pp. 187–209; Fowler and Morales, *El conservadurismo mexicano*; and Brian F. Connaughton, *Dimensiones de la identidad patriótica: religión, política y regiones en México: siglo XIX* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Iztapalapa, División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 2001).

12. Will Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno, "Introducción: Una (re)definición del conservadurismo mexicano del siglo diecinueve," in Fowler and Morales, *El conservadurismo mexicano*, pp. 11–36.

13. Brian F. Connaughton, *Clerical Ideology in a Revolutionary Age: The Guadalajara Church and the Idea of the Mexican Nation, 1788–1853*, Mark Alan Healey, trans. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), p. 80; Connaughton, *Entre la voz de Dios y el llamada de la patria* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), pp. 171–202.

14. Erika Pani, "'Las fuerzas oscuras': El problema del conservadurismo en la historia de México," in *Conservadurismo y derechas en la historia de México*, Erika Pani, ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009), p. 21.

15. Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives," p. 190.

led to an embrace of Conservatism in the 1800s and beyond.[16] But this does more to display the multivalent nature of popular Conservatism, than to describe the situation in Nayarit. In the Mixteca Baja, the autochthonous clergy shielded their parishioners from unwanted intrusions by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and resisted the impulse to intervene in confraternity affairs. They instead left the brotherhoods under the domain of caciques during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and then helped brothers covertly reorganize the confraternities as "agricultural societies" after religious brotherhoods were prohibited during the Reform.[17] 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 priest.

Finally, this essay builds upon two recent shifts in the literature on Mexican religion: the examination of "local religion," and the interplay between religion and politics. Until recently, scholars of religion generally adopted a teleological approach: did European friars successfully implant Catholicism in the minds of native Americans, or were the latter able to resist such imposition and retain pre-Hispanic practices?[18] From such a perspective, Catholicism is a uniform package of liturgy, sacraments, and approved saints. Local variability resulted merely from the degree to which indigenous populations accepted or rejected this institution. Although this approach can be useful when discussing religion in the aggregate over a broad territory, it neglects key variations and accommodations between priests and parishioners at the local level.[19]

These variations become all-important in determining the nature of the Church in a given time and place. And, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church was a diffuse institution. William Taylor finds a "greater laicization of faith" during this period as the secular clergy was

16. Guy Thomson also contributes to our understanding of popular Conservatism in his article on the Puebla highlands, in which he discusses loyalty to priests and the significance of confraternity land to conservative bands in the region. Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla, 1854–1886," in Fowler and Morales, *El conservadurismo mexicano*, pp. 244, 247. Outside Mexico, James Sanders provides a comprehensive discussion of "popular indigenous conservatism" in Colombia's Cauca region. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

17. Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, pp. 66–67, 174.

18. For "spiritual conquest," see Robert Ricard's *cristero*-era classic *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523–1572*, Lesley Byrd Simpson, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966). For indigenous "resistance" to this conquest, see Viviana Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid Under the Cross: Franciscan Discourses of Evangelization and the Nahua Christian Subject in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005); and Malcolm Ebright and Rick Hendricks, *The Witches of Abiquiu: The Governor, the Priest, the Genízaro Indians, and the Devil* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

19. For a more developed discussion of historiographical trends in the study of religion, see Martin Nesvig, "Introduction," in *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, Martin Austin Nesvig, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), pp. xviii–xx.

stretched thin after independence and local men and women filled the void.[20] Furthermore, as travel became more dangerous with the proliferation of gangs and *pronunciamientos* (calls for political change from disaffected groups, backed up by the threat of insurrection), local shrines and images acquired even greater significance among pilgrims over their distant counterparts.[21] As a result of this religious opening, priests and parishioners fought increasingly contentious 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.[22] 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."[23] In this period 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 terms of the spiritual economy: who would maintain control of ecclesiastical property, and how closely would the flock follow its shepherd?[24]

With the historiographical shift toward investigating local religion, scholars of politics have shifted away from a Marxian, materialist interpretation of history and instead have looked to religion for explanations. As Smith argues, for instance, fixing religion in the local sphere "demands that we ask how religious relationships influenced social, economic, and political expectations."[25] Or as Matthew Butler frankly points out in his study of Michoacán *cristeros*, "religion mattered as peasants negotiated a path between the conflicting agendas of Church and state."[26] In Nayarit, also, the very infrastructure of Catholicism—and parishioners' access to and investment in that infrastructure—shaped political action during the Reform period.[27]

Fundamentally, this study finds that Conservative fighters initially went to war to regain and maintain control over religious worship, and then continued to

20. William Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico Before the Reforma* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), p. 166. For a definition of the term "local religion," see William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 3. Carlos M. N. Eire does an excellent job of dissecting the term in "The Concept of Popular Religion," in Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, pp. 1–29.

21. Taylor, *Shrines*, p. 177.

22. Matthew D. O'Hara, *A Flock Divided: Race, Religion, and Politics in Mexico, 1749–1857* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 101, 149–173.

23. Terry Rugeley, *Rebellion Now and Forever: Mayas, Hispanics, and Caste War Violence in Yucatán, 1800–1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

24. Taylor, *Shrines*, p. 168.

25. Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, p. 10.

26. Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico's Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927-29* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

27. Will Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno also find that "respect for religion and customs seems to have been … the primary condition for all alliances between towns and highland *caudillos*." Introducción," in Fowler and Morales, *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX*, p. 30.

fight in order to defend the Church. Communal land was certainly enmeshed in this struggle, inasmuch as it supported communal religiosity. But agrarian concerns on their own did not cause revolt. Rebels fought to defend a spiritual economy, comprising understandings of landownership, religious belief, and religious practice. This economy, founded in the late colonial period, was reshaped in the decades before the Reform by negotiation between priests and parishioners over Church land tenure. Although impassioned, bargaining never broke down. And despite battles like those in Santa María del Oro, these debates culminated in an alliance between rebel fighters and the clergy during the mid-century conflicts.

The Sierra del Nayarit and Its Spiritual Economy (1650–1820)

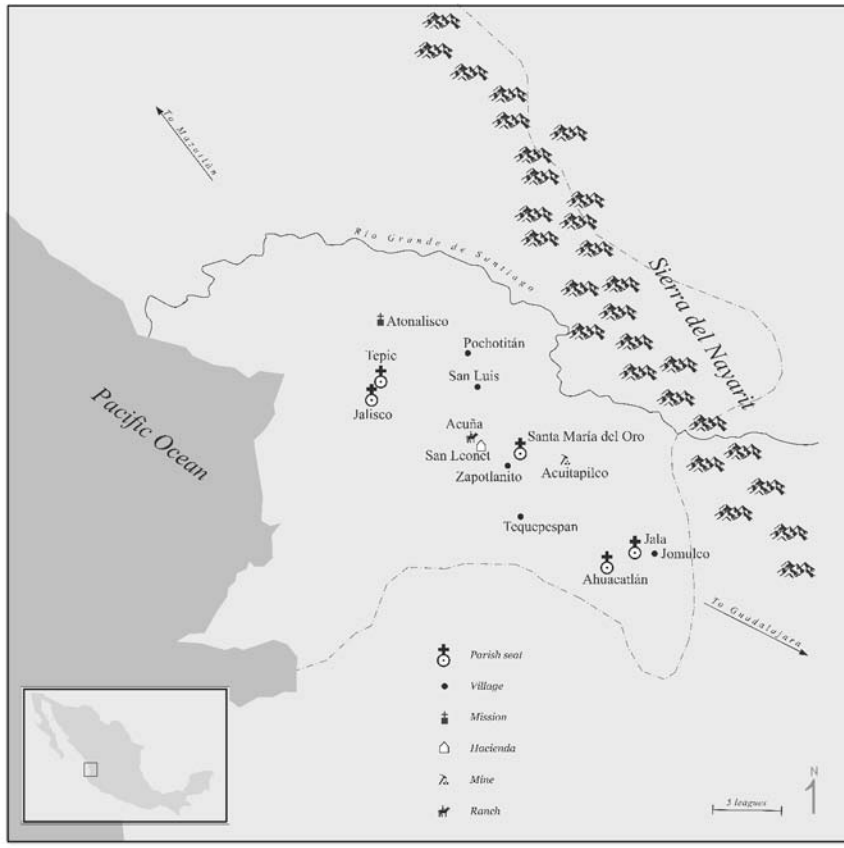
The region under study here is a strip of frontier between the Tierra Caliente along the Pacific coast and the Sierra Madre Occidental rising in the east (Figure 1). Now part of the state of Nayarit, this region was in the first half of the nineteenth century in Jalisco's seventh canton, Tepic, which was then home to just over 60,000 inhabitants.[28] It was within the line of villages and small towns along this strip that Lozada made his headquarters during the Reform and the Second Empire, and from which he consistently drew the majority of his forces.

Much is made of Lozada's connections to the Cora, an indigenous group living in scattered *rancherías* across the Sierra del Nayarit.[29] While it is true that forces loyal to the rebel leader frequently threatened the canton of Colotlán to the east of the Sierra, and that these forces drew from highland Cora populations, the principal nexus of *lozadeña* activity was within the five parishes and the handful of missions of the frontier region to the west of the Sierra. In fact, the ancestors of the villagers of this region had persecuted the Cora in the eighteenth century, or at least made this claim to garner special privileges. Moreover, it was precisely this belligerence and its concomitant benefits, coupled with the more significant religious concessions, that formed the compromise between Spanish authorities and *frontereños* and would ultimately bring Lozada and his forces in this region into an alliance with Conservatives in the mid nineteenth century.

28. López Cotilla, *Noticias geográficas*, p. 134.

29. A number of anthropologists have conducted extensive ethnohistorical research on the Cora and point to the group's alliance with Lozada. They include Philip Coyle, *From Flowers to Ash: Nàyari History, Politics, and Violence* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001); Richard Warner, "An Ethnohistory of the Coras of the Sierra del Nayar, 1600–1830" (Ph.D. diss., University of California-Santa Cruz, 1998); and Laura Magriñá, *Los coras entre 1531 y 1722: ¿indios de guerra o indios de paz?* (Mexico: CONACULTA-INAH, 2002).

FIGURE 1
The Canton of Tepic, 1843



Source: Compiled by the author from "Canton de Tepic, levantado por el teniente de navio Don José M. Narváez, 1824," Archivo Histórico del Estado de Jalisco, Mapoteca; Peter Gerhard, *The North Frontier of New Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); and Manuel López Cotilla, *Noticias geográficas y estadísticas del Departamento de Jalisco* (Guadalajara: Unidad Editorial del Secretaría General del Gobierno de Jalisco, 1983).

Although the region was never an economic powerhouse, the need to protect cash crops grown in Nayarit's Tierra Caliente and rumors of undiscovered silver in the untamed highlands offered sufficient incentive for colonial authorities to maintain barrier settlements between the two areas.[30] Inhabitants of

30. Alexander von Humboldt testified to Tepic's significant tobacco agriculture. For example, see Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. 28. For coffee, see AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Tepic, caja 1, January 26, 1859. For silver mining in the hinterlands, see Archivo Histórico de Instrumentos Públicos del Estado de Jalisco [hereafter AHIPEJ], Libros de Gobierno, book 8, fols. 16–23.

this buffer zone also needed an incentive to stay put, as the Sierra del Nayarit both repelled and attracted the frontereño population. Raiders frequently descended from the hills for plunder and razed the occasional mission. Meanwhile, the mountains stubbornly resisted conquest, offering not only a redoubt for the unsubjugated but also a way out of the colonial system for those who sought to escape it.[31] To provide at least a minimum of stability, then, authorities and residents set up an ad hoc arrangement whereby military service and acceptance of Roman Catholicism were rewarded with privileges such as exemption from tribute for Indian residents, legal protection from large property-holders, and broad control over Church funds and forms of worship.[32]

This control over ecclesiastical property was extended to parishioners via the confraternity. While confraternities were intended in the Tridentine Church primarily as a means to foster lay orthodoxy, in the rural outposts of Nueva Galicia they were virtual "*montes de piedad*," acting both as buttresses supporting the faith of those who only occasionally saw a priest and resources for providing community funds in times of need.[33] Officially, sodality charters laid out the specific number of annual masses the brotherhood would pay for, along with funds for 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 covered funeral costs, such as the associated rites, masses, and burial.[34] Unlike their urban counterparts, which frequently invested their combined income in financial instruments such as mortgages and loans, rural confraternities invested in land,

31. In addition to sheltering Indian raiders (Cora, in this case), the Sierra del Nayarit remained a Sargasso Sea of Nueva Galicia until the early 1700s, collecting drifters such as runaway slaves, refugees from the various Indian rebellions nearby (such as the Mixtón War of 1541 and the 1616 Tepehuan Revolt), "apostates" from the piedmont missions, and even fugitive Spaniards. See Matías Ángel López de la Mota Padilla, *Historia de la conquista del reino de la Nueva Galicia* (Guadalajara: Gallardo y Álvarez del Castillo, 1920) p. 507; Juan de Santiago Garabito, "Carta del obispo de Guadalajara … ," *Relaciones* 18:69 (Winter 1997), p. 86; José de Ortega, S.J., *Apostólicos afanes de la Compañía de Jesús …* (Barcelona: Pablo Nadal, 1754), p. 70; Kieran McCarty and Dan S. Matson, "Franciscan Report on the Indians of Nayarit, 1673," *Ethnohistory* 22:3 (Summer 1975), p. 214; and Francisco Delarrosa, "Entrada del obispo de Guadalajara en la provincia de los Coras Nayaritas … ," *Relaciones* 18:69 (winter 1997), p. 82.

32. For tribute exemption, see AHIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, 2a. colección, leg. 23, vol. 70, exp. 6. Such exemption would not last beyond a generation or two, however. Many frontier residents were paying tribute by the late eighteenth century. AGN, Instituciones Coloniales: Indiferente Virreinal, Tributos, caja 2018, exp. 010; ibid., caja 5096, exp. 046.

33. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, June 23, 1788. Christopher Black situates confraternities within Catholic reform movements of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Black, "Confraternities and the Parish in the Context of Italian Catholic Reform," in *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France, and Spain*, John Patrick Donnelly and Michael W. Maher, eds. (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 1999), pp. 1–26.

34. Although it is outside the geographic area of this study, 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.

livestock, and seed.[35] In cash-strapped central Nayarit, founding clerics often donated a small sum to kick-start the brotherhood. When Bishop Juan Ruiz Colmenero established a sodality in the *serrano* pueblo of San Francisco de Atenco in 1649, he donated 12 cows, a bull, six mares, and an ass, all for the purpose of breeding and thus multiplying the brotherhood's holdings.[36] Beyond their official charters, however, frontier confraternity holdings served as village charity pools, doling out relief during epidemics, famine, and war. A grateful Gabriel López donated two *caballerías* (roughly 210 acres) in 1688 to the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Acuitapilco, as the brotherhood had previously given him corn, cattle, and 80 pesos.[37]

When these sodalities came under royal scrutiny in the late eighteenth century, Bishop Antonio Alcalde justified his diocese's policy of handing over these Church funds to parishioners in a 1788 report to the intendant of Nueva Galicia. With no royal aid and scant chance of any coming from elsewhere, his bishopric's principal financial support was the local confraternity.[38] Although these sodalities were largely informal—without official Church sanction and not under tight clerical oversight—such organizations kept the Church alive from the sixteenth century onward.[39] Keeping the Church alive, however, required taking the bad with the good. If a priest attempted to meddle in confraternity affairs and install a *vecino* (here, a non-Indian) mayordomo over the brotherhood to prevent Indians' unsanctioned withdrawals from confraternity funds, it caused an uproar.[40] Cofrades were quick to abandon their towns and flee to the hills, according to the bishop, so granting them full control over ostensibly ecclesiastical property was necessary for each settlement's survival.

Hand in hand with brothers' control over Church property came their control over the substance and frequency of paraliturgical practices. For most of the colonial period, clergymen paid lip service to orthodoxy, but ecclesiastical supervision

35. William Taylor finds a similar distinction throughout Jalisco. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 304.

36. Delarrosa, "Entrada del obispo," p. 82.

37. AHIPEJ, Ramo de Tierras y Aguas, 2a. colección, leg. 34, vol. 136, exp. 15. In the Yucatán, Nancy Farriss also finds that confraternities acted principally as mutual-aid societies, with funds going toward tax assistance and financial aid for the disabled, widowed, and indigent. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 266.

38. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 20, June 23, 1788.

39. The bulk of confraternities elsewhere in Jalisco were also founded in the first decades of the 1600s. William Taylor and John K. Chance, "Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-Religious Hierarchy," *American Ethnologist* 12:1 (February 1985), p. 8.

40. In the early to middle colonial period, mayordomos were selected from among Indian town leaders, variously *gobernadores*, *cabecillas*, *principales*, or *caciques*. For Tepic, see Pedro López González, *Las cofradías en Nayarit: Cap. Juan López Portillo y Rojas, pionero del desarrollo socioeconómico en Tepic en el siglo XVII* (Tepic: López González, 1980), p. 15; For Jalisco, see AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 21, April 15, 1626; For Jala, see ibid., Jala, caja 1, exp. 3, January 15, 1707.

was limited. Rather than indicating clerical strength, in fact, their occasional need to prohibit a particular behavior suggests that certain heterodoxies were of long standing in their communities. In 1707, the Guadalajara See revealed its coercive weakness when it granted license to members of Jala's Confraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception to carry their brotherhood's image around the diocese and gather donations for their hospital. With the license came caveats that the Immaculate Conception's handlers try to curtail the practice of *huenchihuas*—in which those seeking marriage licenses claimed Our Lady as godmother and thus excused all variety of illicit nuptials—as well as ceremonial meals, dances, profane festivities, and fundraising speeches.[41] Such a detailed list indicates that diocesan authorities were well aware of the festival atmosphere associated with a saint's arrival. However, by delegating that festival's suppression to laymen who were traveling through a remote area with priests few and far between, authorities could not have hoped for much.

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, much like in the Mexican markets of today where the buyer's most effective ploy is to simply walk away, frontereños fled their villages when clergy's demands became too onerous. The Church in Nayarit was the product of compromise. Yet even as this spiritual economy was reaching full strength in the eighteenth century, a recession was on the horizon. A series of European wars, in addition to 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.[42]

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also brought cultural change to the Church. Just as the Iberian empires were embarking on reforms of their own, Jansenist clergy were attempting to curtail what they considered baroque excesses among "fanatic" parishioners in an effort to reconcile religion with enlightenment thinking.[43] In sum, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the

41. Ibid.

42. For an examination of this turn of events in Mexico's capital area, see Michael Costeloe, *Church Wealth in Mexico: A Study of the Juzgado de Capellanías in the Archbishopric of Mexico, 1800–1856* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

43. A few excellent studies of these complex, macro-level political and cultural shifts include David Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán, 1749–1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); and Brian Larkin, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

clergy viewed the frontier Church less as a mutually agreed-upon compromise, and instead as simply compromised. 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.[44]

THE SPIRITUAL ECONOMY IN CYCLICAL RECESSION

The first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by a rhythm of Church offensive and popular resistance—a spiritual "compression-decompression cycle."[45] Rather than a reaction to specific attempts at land confiscation by hostile Liberal governments, it seems the Guadalajara Church's reform strategy was driven more by diocesan mandates and the sense of general uncertainty prevalent in the post-independent state.[46] At the parish level, three broad processes emerged. From 1800 to 1830, the Guadalajara See continued the campaign to shore up Church finances it had begun in the late 1700s, cracking down on frontier confraternities.[47] 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 *sede vacante* (vacant bishopric) a decade later. Beginning in the 1840s, the clergy renewed its reformist maneuvers with vigor and

44. See for example AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 18, July 24, 1804.

45. 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. *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750–1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

46. 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*, p. 123. Margaret Chowning, on the other hand, finds the Church in Michoacán actually accumulated property from 1810 to 1840 during that diocese's long *sede vacante*, and between 1840 and 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. Chowning, "The Management of Church Wealth in Michoacán, Mexico, 1810–1856: Economic Motivations and Political Implications," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22:3 (October 1990), pp. 459–496.

47. 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, circulares y órdenes de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo del Estado de Jalisco*, vol. 2 (Guadalajara: Congreso del Estado, XLIX Legislatura de Jalisco, 1981), pp. 237–238; for Decree 151, see *Colección de los decretos*, vol. 3, pp. 288–292; and for Decree 76, pp. 14–15.

once again ratcheted up the pressure on intransigent parishioners. Frontereños responded to these reforms by seeking succor in an alternative cult at mid-century. In brief, as "institutional turbulence" threw the future of religious practice and its place in Mexican society in doubt, clergy strove to secure their livelihood while parishioners strove both to regain lost ground and gain new concessions.[48] For parishioners, the history of the Church in Nayarit's frontier region, with its high degree of compromise, meant that popular Conservatism was initially more a resistance to clerical intervention in religious affairs than it was to anticlericalism from Liberal politicians.

From 1800 to 1830, priests on the frontier 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 behest 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.[49] 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 that 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.[50] Only two decades earlier in 1781, the brotherhood had reported 1,691 head of cattle, 220 horses and mules, and annual earnings of 615 pesos.[51] 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 near-extinction represented a significant loss over a 20-year period. In contrast, other confraternities in the region could limp along through the nineteenth century with roughly 100 head of cattle or less.[52] 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 an increasing population and the consequent higher demand for food and drink during festivals.[53]

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.

48. O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, p. 19.
49. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 24, November 28, 1800.
50. Ibid., Jala, caja 1, exp. 11, September 13, 1798.
51. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta August 26, 1777 [sic (September 26, 1777)].
52. In 1826, for instance, Santa María del Oro's Confraternity of Our Lady of the Assumption held 114 head of cattle and 26 horses. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 15, April 14, 1826.
53. Taylor and Chance, "Cofradías and Cargos," p. 14.

In 1804, brothers of Camotlán's hospital wrote a letter to the diocesan seat complaining of "oppression" by their priest—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 seat) pending its sale, given the Indians' failure to comply with his demand. The See agreed, and the cattle were herded east.[54]

Independence brought a new range of opportunities to the Nayarit frontier. As civil authorities challenged clerical power, some parishioners adopted a seemingly contradictory dual strategy. On one hand, they would continue to support local clergy under fire. On the other hand, they made their own play for control of religious worship, undermining clerical authority. Beginning in 1826 the Jala town council attacked the local priest on two fronts. In letters to diocesan authorities, council members alleged the curate's abusive drunkenness, his manipulation of a "fanatic" flock, and his intrusive 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.[55] Nevertheless, parishioners reported they secretly contributed to the cult in defiance of council pressure, keeping the church stocked with oil, for instance.[56] 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.[57]

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, Patrón, had attempted to sell off the Immaculate Conception's land only 20 years before, in 1806.[58] Moreover, as the cofrades testified, in the intervening years the priest had not properly used the land rent to support the cult. It is seems less likely that the cofrades were bending unwillingly to pressure from the town council than that they saw in the council a new ally to help them protect their devotion. For lay brothers, priests were merely auxiliaries to their cult—parish-

54. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 18, July 24, 1804.
55. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1826–1827, November 8, 1828.
56. Ibid., carpeta 1802–1838, October 28, 1829.
57. Ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1828–1860, August 9, 1828.
58. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 16, October 31, 1806.

ioners would readily demonstrate their loyalty to the Church when it was under direct attack, but should the priest stand in their way, he could easily be sidestepped in an attempt to protect confraternity property.

In nearby Santa María del Oro, however, the confraternity fractured under a heavier ecclesiastical hand. In 1827 a priest jailed Vicente Zavala, a leading member of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Assumption in Santa María del Oro, for appropriating the brotherhood's image and using it to collect donations, and for distributing confraternity goods without authorization. Accustomed to a more lax style of clerical governance, the indignant 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; because, if not, I will seek someone who will administer Justice.

Unlike what had occurred in Jala, where cofrades distinguished between supporting the priest and supporting the cult, Zavala's brothers in Santa María del Oro alienated him and sided with the curate. When Zavala left the 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 when Zavala failed to present himself in Guadalajara. According to some of his supporters he had instead permanently left the region.[59]

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, the 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 protect the status quo ante and others fell in line with the clergy. In the next decade, those who resisted priests' maneuvers seemed to win out as the Guadalajara See largely abandoned its reformist campaign.

59. Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 16, March 29, 1827.

REPRIEVE IN THE 1830S, RENEWED REPRESSION IN 1840 AND BEYOND

Indeed, frontereños quickly gained some relief from the Church's offensive. Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas died in 1824, and the Guadalajara bishopric remained vacant for more than a decade.[60] Parishioners along the Nayarit frontier enjoyed a period of colonial-style governance as the acephalous Guadalajara Church floundered in its efforts to complete administrative tasks. In Jala parish, 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.[61]

At the same time, clergymen began to report whisperings of devotions operating without official Church sanction or even knowledge. When the 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 a single Mass or contributing anything to the church fabric.[62] The See instructed Bustamante to enlist civil authorities to bring the San Luis cofrades to heel. In addition, in their complaint about an absent priest in 1831, parishioners in Santa María del Oro implied they that they had drawn upon the services of "transient priests" to offer the occasional prayer or novena.[63] Such wandering holy men seem to have been a persistent thorn in the side of the parish; Victorino Núñez complained ten years later in 1842 that these itinerants—"commonly called missionaries"—administered burials in nearby hacienda communities without displaying licenses.[64]

60. 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.

61. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 8, September 2, 1839.

62. Ibid., Jalisco, caja 1, exp. 26, January 22, 1830.

63. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1832, December 17, 1831.

64. Ibid., carpeta 1824–1846, I, July 12, 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

Even as a lay-clergy alliance was fortified elsewhere in Mexico amid the various pronunciamientos of the 1830s and early 1840s, the Nayarit flock quietly regained control over local church funds and worship at the expense of clerical authority. In the Sierra Gorda and Mixteca Baja, priests and caciques rallied popular support to resist those who fought "against the holy religion."[65] Meanwhile, the distant Nayarit frontier was spared the large-scale political upheaval of the center-south, and 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.

As 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 ecclesiastical control. But the priests of the 1840s did not merely pick up where their predecessors had left off. Instead, this new generation entered the priesthood in a period of tribulation for the Church, when politics attracted learned sons who might otherwise 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 perhaps 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 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 Núñez and was troubled by what he saw. In his report to diocesan authorities, he eloquently 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

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Robert M. Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893–1897* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

65. Anne Staples, "The Clergy and How It Responded to Calls for Rebellion Before the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *Malcontents, Rebels, and Pronunciados: The Politics of Insurrection in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, Will Fowler, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), p. 72; Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, p. 135.

> 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?[66]

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.[67]

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.[68] 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.[69] As a result, the See imprisoned Avelar in 1845. Chastened, he returned to Jala but was dead two years later.

Far from relaxing the tension with parishioners, Avelar's replacement, Antonio Galindo, sold off all confraternity property within less than a decade. 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.[70] Also in 1849, Bishop Aranda issued a mandate to have new mayordomos installed in the two

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

67. By "anticlerical decrees," I refer particularly to the Lerdo law, the federal disamortization decree of June 25, 1856. Analysis of the 205 extant land adjudications made under this law in the Tepic region shows that little to no municipal or ecclesiastical property along the Nayarit frontier was sold under its purview. Archivo Histórico del Estado de Nayarit [hereafter AHEN], Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856 (vols. 1–3); ibid., Vicente González, 1861; and AHEN, Jueces de Primera Instancia de Tepic, Ignacio Cruz y Francisco Pintado, 1856–1859.

68. 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.

69. Ibid., July 4, 1844.

70. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 6, September 16, 1850.

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, 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.[71]

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 civil 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 their *hermandad*, or unsanctioned lay brotherhood.[72] 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."[73]

The governor was unmoved. And, just as the parishioners of Jala struggled to maintain brotherhood land, so the cofrades of Santa María del Oro also suffered loss of their confraternity and curtailment of local religious practices. A new priest—the aforementioned Núñez—assumed the curacy in the early 1840s and became broadly unpopular for his aggressive moves to wrangle control of religious funds. Both this priest and his successor battled to take over confraternity lands.[74]

These parishes and their priests were not idiosyncratic. Their similarities signaled broader, region-wide characteristics and trends. Most important among

71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., exp. 19, March 16, 1851.
73. Ibid., exp. 12, October 10, 1852.
74. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1846, I; ibid., carpeta 1849–1857; ibid., carpeta 1844 [sic] (1854); ibid., carpeta 1856. See also AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 21, October 15, 1841; ibid., exp. 22, November 22, 1846; ibid., exp. 19, January 8, 1847; and ibid., exp. 25, April 20, 1852.

these was the continuing poverty of the frontier and the absolute reliance on funds from lay brotherhoods to carry on the work of the Church. 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."[75] Given this penury, confraternity holdings were essential to the local cult, no matter how small. And, by the mid nineteenth century, frontier brotherhood properties were scraping bottom. In Zapotlanito, a town within Santa María del Oro parish, the confraternity was down to 18 head of cattle by 1850. The parish seat kept only 25 head of cattle that same year.[76] Nevertheless, these dwindling resources represented both an integral pool of public wealth, and the only viable reserve for religious activity. Confraternities in 1850s Ahuacatlán paid for everything from cholera relief to church reconstruction.[77] For this reason, priest-parishioner conflict continued to revolve around these societies, as well as their aims.

PARISHIONER RESISTANCE, LOZADA'S RISE (1853–1857)

In 1853, a teenager's mariophany brought this lay-clergy conflict to a head. On April 13, the police commissary of tiny Acuña ranch sent a desperate plea to Núñez asking for help protecting the "old walls" on which a 13-year-old boy had seen Our Lady of Atocha.[78] Although he does not specify when the boy first saw her, the commissary in his letter describes a devotion already established in the community, complete with miracles, pilgrims, and skepticism from the 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, and the priest himself claimed to have seen her on at least six separate occasions.[79] This tacit ecclesiastical approval of the apparition set

75. Ibid., exp. 19, January 8, 1847. "Debt peonage," is the practice whereby an hacendado paid his or her employees in advance and thus ensured their continuing labor.

76. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1824–1846, I, January 30, 1849 [sic (1850)].

77. Ibid., Ahuacatlán, caja 2, exp. 20, September 13, 1850; ibid., June 2, 1851.

78. Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, April 13, 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. *Crossing Borders with the Santo Niño de Atocha* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), pp. 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, May 31, 1853.

79. Ibid., April 22, 1853.

off a full-fledged cult within months. According to a report from the 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.[80]

This apparition represented one of the first tests for the new bishop, Pedro Espinosa y Dávalos. Early on, he recommended caution to Núñez, suggesting that 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 sent along to the See. Espinosa also exhorted Núñez to rail against fanaticism and superstition, which were "no less harmful to these towns than impiety."[81] 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 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.[82]

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.[83] 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."[84] Unlike the "semi-barbarous" *serranos*, the Acuña believers needed a

80. Ibid., May 31, 1853.
81. Ibid., June 22, 1853.
82. Ibid., June 13, 1853; ibid., June 15, 1853.
83. AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia Eclesiástica, vol. 158, fols. 249–250; Brittsan, "Not for Lack of Faith," pp. 11–13.
84. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, June 2, 1854.

heavier hand, not missionaries, in the bishop's estimation.[85] 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.[86] This justice of the peace doubled as an assistant pastor; he was the same Dámaso Martínez who would later find himself holed up in the parish church while Manuel Lozada waited for him outside the town.

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 attracted masses of believers from outside the parish. Earlier paraliturgical practices—burials performed by itinerant holy men, for example, and taxtoles in the backcountry around San Luis—had been hidden and local in scope. On the other hand, the devotion only became broadly popular after it was legitimated by a local priest: Núñez was certainly instrumental himself in propagating the cult and defending the apparition, as when he claimed he had seen the Virgin multiple times. When diocesan authorities stepped in and quashed the movement, however, 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 fled in fear.[87] In late September 1854, Núñez received word that one such gang was headed for Santa María del Oro. He fled to Ahuacatlán, leaving the parish in Martínez's charge.[88] 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.[89]

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. Before they fled their parishes, the priests of both Jala and Santa María del Oro blamed cofrades' poor management of brotherhood funds. In late 1853, a Jala resident accused Galindo of sleeping with his wife; ultimately, supporting witnesses absolved the priest, but in his rebuttal to the See Galindo reported that the entire case had been put forth by "those who abhor me most for reorganizing the confraternities." As he 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

85. The quote comes from AGN, México Independiente: Justicia y Negocios Eclesiásticos, Justicia Eclesiástica, vol. 158, fol. 468.

86. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1853, June 2, 1854.

87. Ibid., carpeta 1844 [sic (1854)], June 20, 1854; ibid., carpeta 1849–1857, August 22, 1854.

88. Ibid., carpeta 1849–1857, September 27, 1854.

89. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Jala, caja 1, exp. 13, February 25, 1855.

> 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.[90]

As the cancer had not been excised in such a timely manner, the sale of the Jala confraternities' properties was inevitable. Similarly, one year earlier Núñez claimed that all the troubles in Santa María del Oro had begun when he announced the sale of the Laguna ranch, which belonged to the Immaculate Conception confraternity. With that maneuver, he aroused a powerful enemy: town leader Juan Brígido, who later participated in Lozada's siege.[91] Unlike the priests, who viewed confraternity alienation as the lamentable, yet necessary final step in protecting Church wealth, Brígido viewed such alienation as an intolerable affront to his control over religious worship. It should be emphasized that, for cofrades, 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, another instance in the colonial Mexican tradition of "bargaining by riot."[92] As had happened in Jala after the clerical appropriation there, cofrades in Santa María del Oro sought restoration from civil authorities. Only after these attempts failed did the flock violently depose both purchasers and renters of confraternity land. On June 20, 1856, cofrades in Santa María del Oro usurped a brotherhood plot that had been rented out, threatening Martínez: "that if I or another give an order that the renters should sow the fields, they will be deposed with armed resistance."[93]

In light of the threats of violence, the Guadalajara See responded to this escalation 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 federal disamortization decree (the Lerdo law), Bishop Espinosa declared a moratorium on all such sales in late September.[94] Then, in January

90. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854.

91. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 25, April 20, 1852; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, January 24, 1856; ibid., carpeta 1849–1857, September 29, 1857.

92. For riot as a bargaining tool, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); and William Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979). For evidence of the continuation of this tradition, see Paul Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls: Popular Protest after the Mexican Revolution, 1940–1952," *Past & Present* 206:1 (February 2010), pp. 175–211.

93. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 17, June 20, 1856.

94. From early August to late September 1856, Bishop Espinosa approved at least five sales in the Tepic region alone. Totaling 18,550 pesos, the amount of the sales was nearly one-third the total value of all compulsory ecclesiastical sales from that region adjudicated under Lerdo. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Tepic, caja 1, August-September 1856; AHEN, Protocolos, Vicente González, 1856, vol. 3. At least eight more sales were pending in late September when Espinosa's moratorium took effect.

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.[95] Bolstered by their victory over the renters, brothers then demanded return of the money from the sale of the confraternity's 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 the priest hand over half the money from its sale in order "to re-form the confraternity as before," promising 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."[96] Then, 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.

As priest-parishioner relations worsened, Manuel Lozada's reputation as a bandit leader grew. For the clergy, Lozada represented a threat to the recent buyers of confraternity properties. In one of the last letters he wrote before he died, Núñez in January 1856 reported to the See rumors that cofrades in Santa María del Oro had allied with Lozada. Vecinos who had purchased or rented the Indians' confraternity land now feared it would be expropriated.[97] Such an alliance may have given cofrades the backbone (and perhaps the firearms) to threaten violence in June of that year. Now, however, following the Laguna disappointment, cofrades brought the rumored alliance into the open as they laid siege to the town.[98] This coalition 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.[99] 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.[100]

95. AHAG, Justicia, Cofradías, Santa María del Oro, caja 2, exp. 17, June 20, 1856.

96. Ibid.

97. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, January 24, 1856.

98. 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.

99. Jean Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada: colección de documentos para la historia de Nayarit,* vol. 4 (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1989), pp. 153–154.

100. 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*, pp. 200–206. "Eusebio Plodo," 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, May 10, 1867; ibid., June 27, 1868. "Antonio Cambero," from Jala, signs his name to the same dispute. Ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, May 18, 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, January 15, 1866. "Ysidoro Jacobo," from that same missive, shows up at the head of 300

In the relative calm of the Second Empire following the violence of the Reform War, Conservative fighters attempted to redraw the diocesan map, choose their own priests, and set themselves up as arbiters of righteousness. And in the face of cofrade violence, an increasingly desperate clergy did an about-face in the 1850s and granted many of their demands. In the run-up to the Reform War, as we have seen, Tepic-area clergy and the new prelate reassessed the financial reform policy of the previous bishop and in 1856 halted all confraternity land sales. As local rebellion was subsumed by national war, and Manuel Lozada emerged as the Conservative strongman in the region, the See granted even steeper concessions to keep his soldiers in the fold. Essentially, Lozada volunteered to guide alienated parishioners back to the Church on his terms, which ecclesiastical authorities accepted.

Rather than a dyed-in-the-wool ideologue, Lozada was a demanding Conservative. In return for defending the Church against Liberal attacks, he and his followers wrested privileges and broader control over the organization they protected. Following the outbreak of war, the rebel leader quickly established his hometown of San Luis as a new religious hub, and himself as mediator between parishioners and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As noted above, in 1859 a group of vecinos from Santa María del Oro testified to Martínez's good services, claiming he frequently traveled to places such as San Luis to keep the peace, even at night without an escort.[101] Clearly, he no longer feared that rebellious cofrades had handed him over for sacrifice. As Lozada survived the Reform War and garnered distinction from the royal court in the Second Empire, his clout in the frontier region also grew. In 1863, the rebel leader requested that a new parish be established, with San Luis as its seat. Furthermore, he named the priest to take charge, and even personally funded reconstruction of the San Luis church.[102]

Before 1856 such a request likely would have been dismissed entirely, but the Guadalajara See now compromised. A new parish was never to be officially recognized, but Lozada's priest was granted permission to perform marriages and

men in Lozada's 1873 campaign. Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, pp. 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, fols. 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, September 16, 1850; AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, July 14, 1861; ibid., caja 2, carpeta 1850–1854, May 29, 1854; ibid., carpeta 1869–1870, December 28, 1873.

101. AHAG, Gobierno, Parroquias, Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1856, September 6, 1859.

102. Ibid., Jala, caja 1, carpeta 1847–1863, March 23, 1863.

administer baptisms at the temple in San Luis, and the parishioners in the towns Lozada named for his new district were now permitted to attend religious functions there. So there was a San Luis-based parish *de facto*, if not *de jure,* and its presence deprived its official parishes of important obventions.[103] Remarkably, this concession was granted only months after Lozada's troops sacked a church outside Tepic, apparently as punishment for its priest's inability to stop the execution of another minister suspected of collaborating with Lozada. The lozadistas then committed *furta sacra*, carrying off the church's image of Our Lord of the Ascension to San Luis, where it remained installed for the next decade.[104]

While Nayarit fighters' alliance with the Church demonstrated a certain amount of autonomy as rebels chose their own clergy and mapped their own parish, Conservative rebellions elsewhere in Mexico more strictly toed the clerical line. In contrast to the state of tension along the Nayarit frontier, lay-clergy relations in the Mixteca Baja were relatively amicable through the first half of the nineteenth century.[105] In the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro, control over confraternities was considerably less important, and priests freely lent money to parishioners to aid their battles against local landowners and government officials. In a massive series of legal cases that stretched from the last few years of the eighteenth century through the first decade of the nineteenth, Gregorio González loaned money to and encouraged various Indian settlements to pursue land reclamation and the removal of the Querétaro *subdelegado* for corruption.[106] Moreover, in an 1842 accord a Jalpan confraternity agreed to sell off a few urban plots to fund church reconstruction, while the parish priest lent parishioners money to purchase a new image.[107] This lay-clerical cooperation would become both axiomatic and antipathetic to its opponents as the nineteenth century progressed, and it was here (and in Puebla) that the smear of manipulative priests leading a fanatical flock was heard most frequently at mid-century.[108]

103. Ibid., Santa María del Oro, caja 1, carpeta 1849–1857, July 1, 1863.

104. Zachary Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear: Fighting with Lozada" (PhD diss., University of California–San Diego, 2010).

105. Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism*, pp. 75–158.

106. Civil, Legajo 1795–1799: Sobre tierras de la congregación de Bernal (Cadereyta), con los indios gañanes de ellas, Archivo Histórico de la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Acervo Microfilm, rollo 24. See also ibid., rollo 26, Civil, Legajo 1806: Cadereita: Naturales de S. Miguel de las Tetillas, sobre abusos del subdelegado E. Villanueva, 1804–1809.

107. Archivo Histórico del Estado de Querétaro, Fondo Notarias, Protocolos, Jalpan, 1842, fojas 55–59; ibid., folio s/n but dated March 14, 1842.

108. James Cypher, "Reconstituting Community: Local Religion, Political Culture, and Rebellion in Mexico's Sierra Gorda, 1846–1880" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2007), pp. 164–165. For Puebla, see Guy P. C. Thomson and David G. LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1999), pp. 48–49.

The truth of the matter was less clear, and clergy and laymen sometimes struggled over religious property.[109] But the Mexican See was typically more willing to compromise with angry parishioners *before* serious conflict arose. For example, Tolimán residents were pursuing a legal case against their priest in 1855, when he requested to transfer benefices with the Xichú priest. The See agreed to a quid pro quo: if residents dropped the case, it would sign off on the transfer, as "it seems [to be] the only way to calm high spirits and restore peace."[110] At any rate, priest-parishioner conflict was not the central issue in Querétaro either immediately before or during the Reform wars. Instead, the patron-client relationships between serranos and the area's clergy and military men, centered as they were on access to land, seem to have driven much of the fighting. In 1853, the Cadereyta parish priest denounced one of his ministers for seconding the Plan de Jalisco, and inviting Conservative military leader Tomás Mejía and his subordinates to the parish house for a meal. The minister responded that he had neither pronounced in favor of the plan nor lunched with Mejía, but even if he had, that it would not have degraded his office. As the minister explained, he was closely related to many of Mejía's compatriots, including the *jefe político* of the movement.[111] As Mejía himself proclaimed in December 1855 (and similarly in October 1856):

> Our efforts will save the clergy, who today do not even have the rights of citizenship; the Church, whose goods, which pertain to the poor, are threatened; the military caste, which is destroyed and annihilated—more than anything, prostituted by the admission of lascivious men from the presidios and known bandits.[112]

In contrast, Lozada and his subordinates—"known bandits" whom the imperial army would later absorb—were consistently vague about defending the Church or the military, but rather claimed to act solely to uphold the faith. As far as religion was concerned, Andrés Rosales announced in 1857 that he was seeking recompense only for the stolen items from the "temples that we venerate so."[113] Moreover, in a retrospective he penned a decade later in 1867, Lozada claimed that the Nayarit frontier had rebelled "independently of my will" in the early 1850s:

109. In 1840 mission residents of San Miguel de las Palmas (Tolimán) battled their friar when he took control of community goods, including some pertaining to the confraternity, but did not produce the promised school, agricultural tools, or benefits to the cult. Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de México, 1840, caja 52, exp. 52.

110. Ibid., 1855, caja 100, exp. 21.

111. Ibid., 1853, caja 88, exp. 33.

112. Maribel Miró Flaquer, *El general Rafael Olvera: cacique de la Sierra Gorda y gobernador de Querétaro* (Queretaro: Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, 2012), p. 46. For the October 1856 pronouncement, see Fernando Díaz Ramírez, *La vida heroica del General Tomás Mejía* (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1970), pp. 29–30.

113. Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, pp. 153–154.

> [Because] I did not then have any understanding of public affairs, I could only consider the political question … from the religious point of view; I consequently did not hesitate for a moment to direct the fervor of those towns toward those Conservative principles that, since then, I have adopted as my political creed.[114]

CONCLUSION

The rebellions in Nayarit and Querétaro illuminate the various colors along the spectrum of Conservatism in nineteenth-century Mexico, when support for the institutional Church shone through the prism of local history and compromise. These two factors—the structure of the Church and lay-clerical relations over the *médian durée*, and the negotiations between priests and parishioners and with other actors over the short term—largely determined how and when certain regions moved to support Conservatives during the Reform period, or to oppose them, for that matter. Given the broadly homogenous methods used to evangelize the New World, many other regions in Mexico experienced a similar history of confraternity establishment and relatively autonomous worship. But not all would ultimately stand behind the Church in the post-independence struggles to form a new Mexican state.

In the Puebla highlands, an Indian cacique guided the towns within his territory to support the Liberal cause by mediating between those towns and national leaders who were often ignorant of their constituents' wants or needs. And this despite the fact that many constituents remained deeply attached to Catholic ritual. To mitigate the disruptive effects of the Reform-era disamortization decrees, for example, Guy Thomson finds that Juan Francisco Lucas negotiated "locally acceptable privatization arrangements … in exchange for support from these communities in regional insurrections."[115] Perhaps most importantly, 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.[116] With policies such as allowing wider latitude for religious celebrations in some towns under his influence, Lucas soon became known as the "protector of the Indian population," akin to Lozada's moniker "father of the pueblo."[117] Through mediation and circumstance, Lucas midwifed Liberalism

114. Ibid., p. 267.

115. Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, p. 18.

116. Thomson, "La contrarreforma en Puebla," p. 243; Díaz Ramírez, *La vida heroica*, p. 66. For Antonio Rojas's anticlerical outrages, see Brittsan, "In Faith or Fear," p. 120; and Joaquín Herrera, *Dentro de la República: episodios, viajes, tradiciones, tipos y costumbres* (Mexico: S. Lomeli y Co., 1889), pp. 117–118.

117. For Lucas's gentler stance on Catholic celebrations, see Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, p. 231. For Lucas's title, see ibid., 64–65. For Lozada's title, see Meyer, *La tierra de Manuel Lozada*, p. 295.

in the *sierra poblana*, pushing reforms like secular schooling while soft-pedaling anticlericalism.[118]

Meanwhile in the Yucatán, despite the Church's long-established ties to local communities—whether through *batabs* (Maya elites who collected church taxes and filled the roles of sacristan, cantor, and catechist) or confraternities—*yucatecos* in 1847 began a half-century-long "caste war" that would leave churches razed and priests murdered, and an alternative lay cult flourishing in their stead.[119] Much as in Nayarit, the ecclesiastical hierarchy began clamping down on lay brotherhoods in the late colonial period. Moreover, priest-parishioner conflict was on the rise following independence. In this case, the source of tension was the Church head tax, which was briefly abolished under the Spanish Cortes, then hastily re-enacted in 1821.[120] In Nayarit, the Guadalajara See had established a relationship with a rising Conservative military man, but in early summer 1847 the opposite took place in the Yucatán. Antonio Mais, an "entrepreneurial priest" who had maintained patronage links with many future caste warriors and remained "the only significant counterweight to men … who had no interest whatsoever in rural tradition and stability," had died.[121] Alienated local leaders were now definitively cast adrift from the Church.

To understand the Conservatism of Nayarit, it is instructive to consider its characteristics and trajectory against those of popular political movements in other Mexican regions. The violent uprisings of the 1850s and 1860s represented as much an attempt to carve out a new future as they did an effort to restore the past. Just as Thomson has pointed to many "Liberalisms," so, too, Mexico's early nineteenth century offered fertile ground for a plurality of Conservatisms that sought to preserve certain key elements of the status quo amid drastic social change.[122] Also, like the varying degrees of anticlericalism and communal landownership among Liberal communities, the degrees of religious autonomy diverged among Conservative communities based on local history and negotiation. Along the frontier of the Sierra del Nayarit, that history was one of compromise, in which priests and bishops devolved control

118. For secular schooling, see Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, pp. 18–22.

119. Terry Rugeley, *Yucatán's Maya Peasantry and the Origins of the Caste War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 14, 24–25. Farriss, on the other hand, points to the Yucatecan confraternity as a fully lay institution, providing aid to the community at large and not to the priest. *Maya Society*, p. 325–326.

120. Rugeley, *Yucatán's Maya Peasantry*, pp. 44, 58–59. Unlike in Nayarit, where confraternities supplied the greatest portion of Church income, in the Yucatán the head tax, or *obvención mayor*, filled that role for the Franciscans in the colonial period, and for the secular clergy in the nineteenth century. Ibid., pp. 27–28.

121. Ibid., pp. 174–175.

122. Thomson and LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism*, p. 23.

over Church funds—and therefore religious praxis to a certain degree—in exchange for parishioners maintaining the Catholic cult, and the Catholic priest, in a buffer zone near the untamed highlands. When the ecclesiastical hierarchy changed the terms of that social contract in the late colonial period and exerted greater fiscal control over the frontier Church in fits and starts up to the 1850s, they alienated their flock precisely in a period when new opportunities for redress, legitimate or otherwise, were opening up.

The influences that in the mid 1850s brought rebellious parishioners back into the fold, and into Conservative ranks, were threefold: first, a new bishop willing to compromise on important issues such as the disamortization of confraternity land; second, a regional cacique who successfully fulfilled his followers' spiritual needs with such acts as retrieving a venerated image of Christ and establishing new parish jurisdictions; and third, those followers' continuing esteem for the Catholic religion and its priesthood, even if certain priests were esteemed more highly than others. If these criteria had not been fulfilled, it is possible that Nayarit rebels might have sided with moderate Liberals during the Reform, or even fulfilled civil bureaucrats' worst fears and offered a second stage for "caste war" in an attempt to reconstruct their local Church.

Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan
K. AARON VAN OOSTERHOUT