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Alcohol Abuse and Tavern Reform in Late Colonial Mexico City

MICHAEL C. SCARDAVILLE*

STUDIES on drinking customs and practices in a number of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American and European cities all underline the importance of alcoholic beverages and taverns in the lives of the poor. The works on the lower classes of London, Paris, and New York also document the social ills resulting from alcohol abuse, most notably, poverty, crime, family dissolution, and disease.¹ The study of alcohol use and abuse in colonial Mexico, however, has been severely hampered by the controversy engendered by proponents of the Black and White Legends. The simplistic Black Legend view of exploited and demoralized inebriated native peoples was based on standard, often published accounts of moralizing Spanish officials and clergy who essentially presented traditional Hispanic attitudes towards the Indians and their use of intoxicants.

Almost a decade ago, one historian wrote that “alcoholism remains one of the important relatively unstudied topics in Spanish colonial history,” and called for a moratorium on unsubstantiated generalizations and for serious archival research.² William B. Taylor has recently published the first major study on alcohol use in New Spain, although it concentrates primarily on the drinking habits and patterns in the countryside.³

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1. Dorothy M. George, *London Life in the XVIIIth Century* (New York, 1926); J. J. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th Century* (New York, 1967); Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Frank Jellinek (New York, 1973); Jeffrey Kaplow, *The Names of Kings: The Parisian Laboring Poor in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1972); Douglas Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement in the Colony of New York, 1691–1776* (Ithaca, 1974); Raymond Mohl, *Poverty in New York, 1783–1825* (New York, 1971).

2. Lewis Hanke, “A Modest Proposal for a Moratorium on Grand Generalizations: Some Thoughts on the Black Legend,” *HAHR*, 51 (Feb. 1971), 112, 114. For the White Legend position, see Benjamin Keen’s two articles, “The Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities,” *HAHR*, 49 (Nov. 1969), 703–719 and “The White Legend Revisited: A Reply to Professor Hanke’s ‘Modest Proposal,’” *HAHR*, 51 (May 1971), 336–355.

3. William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, 1979).

The purpose of this article, however, is to examine the less inhibited urban traditions of alcohol use in late colonial Mexico by studying the pervasive use of intoxicants among the poor of Mexico City, both Indian and non-Indian alike, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The nature of the ubiquitous legal and illegal taverns and the abortive program to reform the drinking places will also be analyzed to illustrate the importance the poor attached to intoxicants and the ambivalent attitude the administrative and economic elites held toward the use of alcohol among Mexico City's poor.⁴

Intoxication posed an unending problem for royal and viceregal governments in colonial Mexico. Within a decade after Cortés defeated the Aztecs, the Spanish crown promulgated legislation regulating the use of alcoholic beverages among the conquered Indians.⁵ Despite a stream of prohibitions against public intoxication over the three succeeding centuries, the lower classes of the colony readily and excessively imbibed a myriad of legal and illegal intoxicating beverages. By the late colonial period, the last half century before the outbreak of the independence wars in 1810, the colonial authorities contended that galloping intoxication rates among the poor threatened the ability of the state to effectively govern Spain's richest colony and its populous administrative and financial center, Mexico City. With the poor comprising over eighty-five percent of the city's 112,926 inhabitants in 1790, little wonder the viceroys feared that the errant behavior caused by alcohol abuse undermined law and order in the largest and most rapidly growing urban center in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century New Spain.⁶

Archival and published sources all indicate that alcoholic beverages (especially pulque, aguardiente, and tepache) and taverns (*pulquerías*, *casas de pulque*, *tepacherías*, and *vinaterías*) assumed a central role in

4. This article is based on materials consulted in the following archives of Mexico City: Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN), Archivo del Antiguo Ayuntamiento (AAA), Archivo Judicial del Tribunal (AJT), Archivo General del Juzgado (AGJ), and the Biblioteca Nacional de México (BN).

5. Cédula, Aug. 24, 1529, AGN, Historia, vol. 573, exp. 2, fols. 6–6v.

6. According to the 1790 census of Mexico City, the poor, defined in this article as a collection of unemployed vagrants, low skilled and factory workers, and artisans, comprised 88.1 percent of the population. "Estado general de la población de México, capital de Nueva España . . . año de 1790," AGN, Impresos Oficiales, vol. 51, exp. 48. It is my contention that despite a wide range of incomes between highly skilled artisans such as silversmiths and unskilled laborers such as water carriers, the poor formed a distinct subculture in which many members shared similar attitudes and patterns of conduct which *la gente culta*, or upper classes, regarded as alien and deviant. Testimony in criminal cases and police arrest records illustrates the similarity in values and behavior among the lower classes of Mexico City in the late colonial period.

the lives of the urban poor.⁷ A Spanish visitor to Mexico City in the 1790s was impressed not only with its opulence, but also with the excessive numbers of drunks he saw throughout all sections of the metropolis.⁸ Contemporaries commented that drinking crimes represented the most commonly committed offenses in Mexico City in the late colonial period. Data taken from a series of police and court records called *libros de reos* underline the prevalence of intoxicants.⁹ Drink related offenses, which included public intoxication, tavern violations, and illegal sale of intoxicants, accounted for more than forty-five percent of all arrests in 1798, the year for which the data is most complete: twenty-four percent for tavern infractions, twenty-one percent for drunkenness, and less than one percent for the unlawful sale of alcoholic beverages.¹⁰ In that year the city police forces apprehended over 2,300 persons, or approximately three percent of the drinking-age population, for public intoxication.¹¹ During the day and especially evenings, the streets of the capital and even the steps of the cathedral were so cluttered with unconscious drunks

7. Pulque is a fermented drink made from the juice of the maguey or agave plant. The intoxicant was sold in either the legal pulquerías (pulque taverns) or illegal *casas de pulque* (pulque houses). Tepache, an alcoholic beverage made from sour pulque mixed with brown sugar and a variety of citrus fruits, was sold in the unsanctioned tepache bars or *tepacherías*. *Aguardiente de caña* (cane alcohol) is a distilled liquor made from sugarcane. Although *vinaterías* had been established in the sixteenth century as wine taverns for the Spanish inhabitants of the city, they had become primarily *aguardiente* taverns by the eighteenth century.

Pulque in its various pure and adulterated forms was the principal drink in the lives of the urban poor at the end of the colonial period, with each person over fifteen years of age consuming approximately 187 gallons annually. Consumption of *aguardiente* was considerably less, although its higher alcohol content compensated for this difference to some extent. Between 1797 and 1804, per capita consumption of the intoxicant in Mexico City ranged between 2.5 and 4 gallons annually. For an extended discussion of consumption rates, see Michael Charles Scardaville, "Crime and the Urban Poor: Mexico City in the Late Colonial Period" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Florida, 1977), pp. 211–212.

8. *Diario de Madrid*, Jan. 25, 1791 as quoted in *Gazetas de México*, Aug. 2, 1791, p. 366.

9. The *libros de reos* are summary inventories of 6,064 arrests and informal and formal judicial hearings conducted in the nine lower tribunals of late colonial Mexico City. The ten extant books cover the years 1794, 1795, 1796, 1798, 1800, and 1807, and represent criminal data recorded in the courts of the major judicial officials (corregidor and two *alcaldes ordinarios*) and in the police districts of the minor ward police (*alcaldes de barrio*). The *libros* are located in the Archivo Judicial del Tribunal and Archivo General del Juzgado, two major civil and penal archives in Mexico City.

10. AJT, Libro de Reos. Corregidor, 1798; Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1798; Libro de Reos. Alcaldes de barrio, nos. 22 and 23, 1798. Unless otherwise noted, the arrest and court statistics used in this article are derived from analysis of the nine *libros de reos* for the years 1795, 1796, 1798, 1800, and 1807.

11. The drinking-age population consists of all persons over fifteen years of age which in 1798 was approximately 85,000. Scardaville, "Crime and the Urban Poor," pp. 33, 53–54. The actual percentage of the drinking-age population arrested for intoxication would be slightly lower if transients were included in the total population of the city.

that the night police force (*guardafaroleros*) needed four carts to haul the bodies to the overcrowded municipal jail.¹²

Data gleaned from the arrest records, however, do not accurately depict the incidence of drunkenness since the police apprehended only a fraction of public inebriates. The pulquerías, for example, sold enough pulque daily to serve almost 62,000 customers. Calculating from such statistics, the consulado conservatively put the number of drunks in Mexico City at 12,000 each day. If such estimates are to be believed, then about thirteen percent of the drinking-age population was inebriated daily, and the percentage was substantially higher on the eighty-five religious holidays when entire neighborhoods drank themselves into a state of unconsciousness.¹³ The above arrest statistics and estimates on widespread public inebriation substantiate the belief that Mexico City, a growing, impersonal, socially and economically heterogeneous urban center, functioned as an "island of personal liberty" where traditional village norms regulating consumption of intoxicants were invalid.¹⁴

Two factors contributing to the high incidence of intoxication among the poor of Mexico City were the prevalence and function of the drinking places. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were approximately 1,600 legal and illegal taverns distributed throughout the capital. Of the 758 legal bars, 45 were pulquerías, 593 were *vinaterías*, and 120 were retail establishments such as pulperías, *tiendas mestizas*, and *cafeterías* which sold aguardiente at reduced prices. The 850 *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías* accounted for the bulk of the unsanctioned taverns. In all, there was one tavern for about every fifty-six persons over fifteen years of age in the capital, a calculation which does not include the numerous pulque stalls scattered throughout the markets or the countless

12. Dionisio Boneto to Viceroy Garibay, Mexico City, May 18, 1809, AAA, Alumbrado, vol. 2, exp. 20; AGN, Historia, vol. 58, exp. 21, fol. 697; AJT, Penal, vol. 9 (1803), exp. 53. Arrests for drink related offenses were not just confined to Indians as many Spanish administrators, chroniclers, and historical works would have us believe, but were scattered throughout all sectors of the urban poor. Yet according to the *libros de reos*, Indians did possess the highest rate of inebriety. Although constituting twenty-eight percent of the city's population, they accounted for fifty-five percent of all intoxication cases. Spaniards, mestizos, and mulattos represented twenty-three, seventeen, and five percent of the arrests respectively. Spaniards, on the other hand, were more often arrested for disruptive and illegal behavior in the sanctioned and clandestine taverns.

13. "Informe sobre pulquerías y tabernas el año de 1784," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación*, 18 (Apr.–Sept. 1947), 384–385; Consulado to Viceroy Iturrigaray, Mexico City, July 20, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 43v. For a detailed account of the excessive use of intoxicants during the fiesta of San Antonio de Abad in 1807 and 1808, see AGN, Policía, vol. 34, fols. 95–141.

14. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*, p. 37.

number of women who unlawfully sold pulque in the streets after the pulquerías closed at sunset.¹⁵

All taverns, both legal and illegal, were much more than places to buy and consume alcoholic beverages on the premises. They were an integral part of the social and financial life of the lower classes, serving as places of recreation where leisure hours could be spent dancing, singing, gambling, and drinking with family, friends, and lovers. They provided lodging for the homeless poor who, for free or for a nominal fee, could sleep in a back room or under the bar. They were places where the poor could easily pawn their own or stolen goods in return for money, credit, or drink. The drinking house functioned as a reassuring institution in a society subject to the anxieties of accelerating corn prices, periodic epidemics, and job insecurity.¹⁶

Less than one-half (approximately forty-seven percent) of the taverns in Mexico City were properly licensed and sanctioned by the viceregal authorities. Compared to the informal drinking places found in the countryside, the legal taverns of Mexico City were well-structured, legally prescribed commercial establishments which served a wider variety of fermented and distilled alcoholic beverages.¹⁷ The pulquería ordinances fixed the number of those drinking places. The maximum of thirty-six pulquerías in the capital since the late seventeenth century had increased to forty-five by 1784 as a result of population growth and fiscal considerations. Several pulquerías were not always in operation, and during the 1790s, the number fell below the legal limit.¹⁸ While the number of pulquerías remained relatively stable, the number of *vinaterías* rose dramatically. Reflecting the increased consumption of hard liquor after the legalization of colonial manufactured aguardiente in 1796, the number of *vinaterías* jumped from 194 in 1784, to 593 in 1800, to 784 in 1807, for a cumulative increase of 304 percent.¹⁹

15. AGN, Policía, vol. 17, fols. 56–59v; Francisco Sedaño, *Noticias de México*, 2 vols. (México, 1880), II, 37. According to a visitor to Mexico City in 1777, each street, even those in the inaccessible outskirts, generally had a minimum of three or four taverns. Juan de Viera, *Compendiosa narración de la ciudad de México* (México, 1952), p. 91. Pulperías and *tiendas mestizas* were types of general stores.

16. AGJ, Penal, vol. 1 (1803), exp. 29; AJT, Libro de Reos. Corregidor, 1794, fol. 30v; Libro de Reos. Corregidor, 1796, fols. 7v–8; *Gazetas de México*, Jan. 11, 1791, pp. 243–244.

17. Distilled beverages were not as common in rural communities as in Mexico City and other large urban centers. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*, pp. 55–57.

18. Viceroy Bucareli to Corregidor, Mexico City, Nov. 2, 1775, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 195; Bernardo Bonavía to Viceroy Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 5, 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 91–91v; Viera, *Compendiosa narración*, p. 103; Sedaño, *Noticias de México*, II, 18.

19. "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 227; Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, July 20, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 43–43v; dictamen, Francisco Alonso Teran to Junta del Gobierno del Consulado, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, *ibid.*, exp. 2, fol. 15.

The physical dimensions of the pulquerías more than offset their restricted numbers. Located primarily in plazas or on undeveloped land, pulquerías, some as large as 150 feet by 60 feet, could accommodate at least 600 customers at one time, which, according to one estimate, meant that on any given day one-half of the city's population, in addition to the transients, frequented the pulque taverns.²⁰ To facilitate police surveillance and prevent "disorder and crime," the ordinances specified that three sides of the pulquerías be exposed to public view with the remaining side covered to protect the employees from the sun. However, the construction of only seven pulquerías complied with the law. Twenty percent had two sides covered, twenty-four percent had three sides, and forty percent had all four sides covered with either wooden partitions or canvases.²¹

Although all pulquerías resembled tent-like structures, the physical plan of the *vinaterías* corresponded to two basic types: the fully-equipped and well-stocked aguardiente and wine bars and the smaller *zangarros*. The formal *vinaterías*, complete with tables, benches, lanterns, bar, and storage room, were located primarily in stores that had been converted into taverns. Almost two out of every five of these *vinaterías*, however, doubled as retail shops such as pulperías and *tiendas mestizas* in which the proprietor supplemented his earnings by installing a tavern in a corner of the store.²² *Zangarros*, referred to as *pequeñas vinaterías* by the authorities, were more often located in private homes and apartment complexes (*vecindades*). Representing an investment of only twenty-five or thirty pesos, they contained merely a bench or perhaps a table, ladle, candle, and several drinking vessels. In 1800, 309 of the 593 enumerated *vinaterías*, or fifty-two percent, were classified as *zangarros*, but within six years, they accounted for two of every three *vinaterías*. By opening these small taverns, artisans with some capital and small shopkeepers endeavored to profit from the increased popularity of aguardiente after legalization.²³

20. Arrendatarios de Pulque de México to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fol. 118; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 208.

21. AGN, Historia, vol. 573, fols. 2–8; "Ordenanzas de Pulquerías," Revillagigedo, Jan. 25, 1793, AGN, Bandos, vol. 17, fol. 32; "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 207–208, 211–212.

22. AGN, Policía, vol. 17, fols. 38–39v, 42–49, 56–59v. For an example of a tavern-store, see AJT, Penal, vol. 11 (1809), exp. 39.

23. Informe, Junta del Gobierno del Consulado, Mexico City, May 30, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 2, fol. 3; Francisco Xavier Borbón to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Jan. 30, 1806, *ibid.*, exp. 1, fol. 19v; Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, July 20, 1807, *ibid.*, fols. 43–43v and 46; Ambrosio de Sagarzurieta to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Oct. 31, 1807, *ibid.*, fol. 76; AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1785), exp. 12; vol. 6 (1796), exp. 29 and 37; vol. 11 (1808), exp. 29; AGJ, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario menos antiguo, 1807, fol. 55.

Each city block had at least one pulquería, *vinatería*, or *zangarro*, but the majority of the legal taverns were situated in the outlying districts (barrios) of Mexico City. The central wards of the capital contained less than two out of five drinking places. Pulquerías were fairly evenly distributed throughout all major administrative districts despite the clustering of such taverns in at least one sparsely populated district. The pulquerías were, however, situated away from the principal government, religious, and economic centers. Not one could be found in the center of the city.²⁴

Like the pulquerías, the majority of the *vinaterías* by 1805 were located in the outlying sections of the city. Reflecting greater consumption of aguardiente by Spaniards and mestizos before legalization, the interior barrios where most non-Indians resided contained eighty-one percent of the liquor taverns in the 1780s. With increased consumption of aguardiente among Indians following a drop in prices after 1796, the overwhelming majority of new *vinaterías*, especially the *zangarros*, opened in the predominantly Indian neighborhoods. Within a decade after liberalizing the aguardiente trade, the outlying districts contained almost two of every three large and small *vinaterías*.²⁵

The distribution of the legal taverns posed a serious threat to public order in the capital. The proximity of these drinking places facilitated the transit from one to another, and a 1778 law designed to keep these taverns at least two blocks apart was ineffective.²⁶ Moreover, their location in the barrios rendered police supervision more difficult. By the time the police journeyed into these districts, word of mouth had eliminated or concealed any obvious offense. The municipal government contended that the only way to prevent disorders from occurring in the taverns would be to station a police magistrate in them throughout the day and evening, a logistically impossible proposal.²⁷

Marked differences existed in the ownership patterns of the pulquerías and *vinaterías*. Most proprietors of the pulque taverns were wealthy individuals whose drinking places served as lucrative investments. Only corporations or well-to-do persons could purchase a pulquería since its

24. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 205–206; AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 17v–18, 20, 91, 193v–194.

25. "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 227; Alcaldes de barrio, nos. 29–32, to José Mariano Sánchez y Mora, Mexico City, Aug. 22, 1805, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 1–1v; informe, Junta del Gobierno del Consulado, Mexico City, May 30, 1807, *ibid.*, exp. 2, fol. 3. Consumption of aguardiente simultaneously increased among Indians in the countryside. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*, p. 55.

26. Discurso, Prior Olloqui, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 2, fols. 7v–8; Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Mar. 15, 1808, *ibid.*, exp. 1, fol. 88v; AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1785), exp. 12.

27. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 207, 215, 227.

average value in the early 1790s was 13,300 pesos, although some were worth as much as 30,000 pesos.²⁸ Consequently, owners included influential attorneys, clerics, the Indian governments of Santiago Tlatelolco and San Juan, entrepreneurs such as the Conde de Regla, and even Oidor Francisco Leandro de Viana. The proprietors earned profits from the pulquerías in two ways. The majority merely leased the taverns to individuals (*arrendatarios*) who in turn made their living from the daily sale of pulque. For the ennobled entrepreneurs, however, the largest profits came from the production, manufacture, and sale of the pulque cultivated on their haciendas. Vertical integration of all phases of the pulque trade meant a guaranteed market for the beverage, no matter how inferior the quality.²⁹

One of the leading hacendados in this economic venture was the Marqués de Vivanco, the affluent owner of the Bolaños mine. Recognizing the profit-making potential of pulque, Vivanco, by the mid-eighteenth century, began to plant maguey on his livestock ranches in Chapingo and eventually invested considerable amounts of mining capital in his maguey haciendas. Other nobles who did not own pulquerías also rushed into the pulque trade, and some, such as the Marqués de Salvanevada, invested almost one million pesos in their maguey properties.³⁰ Considerable profits could be made from the pulque trade. As Alexander von Humboldt stated, “a proprietor who plants 30,000 to 40,000 maguey is sure to establish the fortune of his children.”³¹ In 1770, the Conde de Regla earned 40,000 pesos from his maguey hacienda at San Javier, and by the end of the decade, his ownership of four pulquerías in Mexico City assured him of a regular market for his product. In 1786, the Conde de Jala’s pulque profits amounted to 25,000 pesos while in 1811 those of the Marqués de Vivanco exceeded 46,000 pesos.³²

28. Sedaño, *Noticias de México*, II, 37; AGN, Policía, vol. 15, exp. 1.

29. Miguel de Yrisarri to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, June 26, 1794, AGN, Policía, vol. 15, exp. 1, fol. 35v; Pedro Jacinto Valenzuela to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Feb. 9, 1793, *ibid.*, vol. 19, fol. 143v; Bucareli to Corregidor, Mexico City, Nov. 2, 1775, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 195; Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule* (Stanford, 1964), p. 394.

30. Doris M. Ladd, *The Mexican Nobility at Independence, 1780–1826* (Austin, 1976), pp. 42–45, 239, n. 41, 270, n. 31. Also see Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 290, 396. The expansion of maguey haciendas in central Mexico seriously limited corn production and contributed to accelerating corn prices at the end of the colonial period. Dean y cabildo eclesiástico to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, June 27, 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 207–208. According to Gibson, some of the most fertile lands in the valley of Mexico shifted to maguey cultivation in the late eighteenth century. *Aztecs*, pp. 318, 556, n. 101.

31. Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, trans. by John Black, 4 vols. (London, 1811), II, 524.

32. AGN, ed., *La administración de D. Frey Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa, cuadragésimo sexto virey de México*, 2 vols. (México, 1936), I, 433–435; von Humboldt,

In the *vinaterías*, the proprietors (*vinateros*) usually managed the taverns themselves, although some turned the daily management over to an administrator whose salary consisted of half the day's profits. This practice was particularly popular among *vinateros* who also worked as artisans or as employees in the tobacco factory. The overwhelming majority of proprietors, however, were males who relied on the income earned from the tavern as their sole means of support.³³

Before the legalization of *aguardiente de caña*, *vinateros* were obligated to buy distilled beverages from wholesale import merchants. Because of the lower price of colonial cane alcohol, most *aguardiente* consumed in Mexico City was illegally manufactured in factories scattered in the adjoining jurisdictions of Mexicalcingo, Xochimilco, and Chalco.³⁴ A series of canals connecting these regions to the capital facilitated the illicit entry of *chinguirito*, as the illegal intoxicant was called. With over 50,000 vessels entering the city each year, the smugglers found that the undermanned customhouses were unable to prevent their activities. Early one morning in 1796, however, the night police uncovered one elaborately organized contraband scheme. Loaded with six barrels of *chinguirito*, a representative from one of the factories paid Indian farmers from Xochimilco and porters from Mexico City six reales to transport his cargo. Beginning around 2:00 A.M., the Indians rowed the canoe to a point below the customs gate at the southern edge of the city where they unloaded the liquor. From there, the six porters carried the barrels past the guardhouse, reloaded the cargo on another canoe, and transported it to a designated point east of the Plaza Mayor where *vinateros* had their employees waiting to claim their order.³⁵ Even after legalization, the early morning smuggling of *aguardiente* continued, although on a reduced scale.

Political Essay, II, 526; Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 329–331; Ladd, *Mexican Nobility*, p. 141. Not all the pulque sold in the capital originated from the lands of the hacendados. Tenants who rented from proprietors without maguey lands purchased the intoxicant from any of three sources: individual Indians from surrounding villages who manufactured pulque grown around their homes, small farmers who devoted a fraction of their lands to maguey, and Indian villages which communally cultivated the crop. *Gazetas de México*, Feb. 27, 1787, p. 308; Apr. 26, 1791, p. 312; Aug. 21, 1792, p. 148; Jan. 21, 1795, p. 16; Gibson, *Aztecs*, p. 329.

33. AJT, Penal, vol. 4 (1791), exp. 59; José Alvarez y Cuebas to Viceroy Branciforte, Mexico City, Dec. 28, 1797, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 192; AGN, Policía, vol. 17, fols. 56–59v. Also see petitions of *vinateros* in AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exps. 6 and 9.

34. Bando, Bucareli, Mexico City, Dec. 5, 1772, AGN, Bandos, vol. 8, fol. 38; AJT, Penal, vol. 6 (1796), exps. 29 and 37; Norberto García Menocal to Bucareli, Mexico City, Aug. 20, 1772, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 159.

35. AGN, Policía, vol. 29, fols. 337v–338; AJT, Penal, vol. 6 (1796), exp. 54; Sedaño, *Noticias de México*, I, 60.

Viceregal ordinances and audiencia decrees regulated the hours the pulque and aguardiente taverns could sell intoxicants. Both opened at sunrise; pulquerías closed at sunset and vinaterías at 9:00 in the evening. Although required to remain closed on Sundays and religious holidays until church services ended, most taverns stayed open the entire day.³⁶ One official of the consulado noted a peculiar drinking pattern among the poor. He stated that the *vinaterías* were full of customers from sunrise, but that by ten o'clock, the pulquerías were packed with drinkers who spent their day "cooling off." The aguardiente taverns became crowded once again at sunset as artisans leaving the workshops went there to "warm themselves." The drinking places were especially full on Saturdays, the traditional payday for most of the workers, and "the majority (of the artisans) spent it on their vice that very same night."³⁷ Analysis of the *libros de reos* corroborates this statement as twenty percent of all arrests for intoxication and fifty-five percent of all arrests for tavern violations occurred on Saturday night.

The pulquerías, because of their size, rarely caused problems for the authorities in opening and closing at the specified hours. Rare was the *vinatero* who abided by the regulations.³⁸ As a result of their location on the outskirts of the city, *zangarros* flaunted the law by remaining open outside the legal hours. In the *vinaterías* situated within or close to the center of the city, the *vinateros* adopted various measures to conceal their transgressions from the police. In addition to selling the liquor through a window or, as in larger *vinaterías*, closing the outer room and moving into a hidden interior room, many taverns had a second, sometimes secret, entrance to the bar, either through an adjoining store or from a dimly lit alley. For further protection, *vinateros* often hired someone to watch for police patrols.³⁹

Alcoholic beverages were legally sold outside the pulquerías and *vinaterías*, particularly in popular eating establishments such as *almuercerías*

36. "Ordenanzas de Pulquerías," Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 25, 1793, AGN, Bandos, vol. 17, fols. 31–38; Borbón to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Jan. 30, 1806, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 18; AJT, Penal, vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30; vol. 7 (1797), exp. 12; Eusebio Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria de todos los autos acordados de la real audiencia y sala del crimen de esta Nueva España, y providencias de su superior gobierno*, 2 vols. (México, 1787), I, part four, XXXIV.

37. Dictamen, Terán to Junta del Gobierno del Consulado, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 2, fol. 19v. Also see "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 214.

38. For example, see AJT, Penal, vol. 5 (1791), exp. 4; vol. 9 (1803), exps. 9 and 57; AGJ, Penal, vol. 1 (1802), exps. 54–56; AGN, Policía, vol. 20, fol. 228.

39. AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1789), exp. 68; vol. 7 (1797), exp. 12; vol. 9 (1801–1803), exps. 2 and 47; Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria*, I, part four, XXXIV.

and *fondas*, coffee houses, apothecary shops, and retail outlets such as *cacahuaterías*.⁴⁰ The municipal authorities permitted pulque stalls in the markets of the Volador and Parián for a weekly fee of ten pesos. The Plaza Mayor, before its renovation in the early 1790s, contained numerous unsanctioned pulque and tepache bars in addition to Indians who legally sold uncultivated pulque, called *tlachique*, at reduced prices.⁴¹ Intoxicants were also sold in the viceregal palace before Viceroy Revillagigedo forbade the practice.⁴²

Over one-half of the taverns in Mexico City operated without the necessary viceregal license, and, more so than the legal taverns, resembled the informal rural cantinas. Approximately 850 *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías* were scattered throughout the entire urban zone, especially in districts outside the center of the city.⁴³ According to the Conde de Regla, the illegal drinking places sold one-half of all the pulque consumed in the capital.⁴⁴ His figure may be exaggerated, but it indicates the importance of the *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías* within lower-class society.

Women, most of whom were Spanish and married, comprised the majority of the proprietors of illegal taverns. Commonly called *cuberas*, they sold intoxicants directly from their homes or apartments which contained the essential barroom paraphernalia.⁴⁵ Occasionally they procured pulque from *arrendatarios* who paid them one-half real for every arroba of the intoxicant sold in their residences. Other *cuberas* purchased three or four-day-old sour pulque from the pulquerías and made it drinkable by converting it into tepache. Moreover, many male proprietors of the illegal pulque and tepache houses worked in the pulquerías in some

40. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 224–225; Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Mar. 15, 1808, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 89; AJT, Penal, vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30; AGJ, Penal, vol. 2 (1803), exp. 30; Viera, *Compendiosa narración*, pp. 91–92.

41. Arrendatarios de Pulque de México to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fol. 118v; Cosme de Mier to Branciforte, Mexico City, Feb. 19, 1798, *ibid.*, vol. 31, fol. 104; testimony of Manuel Martínez del Campo in residencia of Revillagigedo, June 19, 1796, AGN, Historia, vol. 59, exp. 4; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 218.

42. Sedaño, *Noticias de México*, II, 63–67.

43. AGN, Ordenanzas, vol. 1, fol. 103; Sagarzurieta to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Apr. 30, 1808, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 104v–105; AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1785), exp. 18; Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria*, I, part five, DCXVIII.

44. *La administración de . . . Bucareli*, I, 433–435.

45. AJT, Penal, vol. 4 (1790), exps. 17 and 47; AJT, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1798, fol. 9v; AGJ, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario menos antiguo, 1807, fols. 22v–23. According to the *libros de reos*, fifty-four percent of the *cuberas* were of Spanish descent and seventy percent were married.

capacity, as cashiers for instance, and obtained the beverage by buying or pilfering a portion of sour pulque.⁴⁶

Most of the pulque consumed in the unsanctioned taverns, however, was contraband. The *cuberas* purchased the intoxicant either from customs officials or from Indians residing on the fringes of the city who privately cultivated maguey under the pretense that it was for personal consumption.⁴⁷ Customs officials at the city gates generally weighed only part of the incoming pulque, keeping a fraction for themselves which they concealed in the guardhouse and later sold at a reduced cost to the *cuberas*.⁴⁸ The illegal procurement of pulque concerned the colonial authorities who realized that the clandestine introductions defrauded the treasury of tax monies and enabled the proprietors of the illegal taverns to lower prices, which, in turn, curtailed consumption at the pulquerías.⁴⁹

To meet the demands of the urban poor, alcoholic beverages could be bought anywhere in the city, at any time, and at any price.⁵⁰ The popularity of intoxicants and their immoderate use among the lower classes led royal and viceregal authorities to embark upon a program in the late colonial period aimed at reducing the incidence of intoxication in Mexico City. Through measures improving law enforcement, imposing more stringent penalties on drunks, and reforming the legal taverns, the authorities hoped to counteract the rising tide of drunkenness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Only by curtailing drunkenness, considered the “mother of many vices,” could they reform the behavior of the poor and restore public order in the growing metropolis.⁵¹

In response to a letter written by the city’s parish priests concerning the abuse of pulque on Sundays and holy days, Charles III in late 1775 ordered Viceroy Bucareli and the audiencia to take the necessary measures to end the sale of intoxicants in the *vinaterías* and pulquerías on

46. “Informe sobre pulquerías,” pp. 224–225, 365, 369; AGJ, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario menos antiguo, 1807, fol. 34.

47. “Informe sobre pulquerías,” p. 219. Pulque production for domestic use was not subject to taxation. See Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 318–319.

48. AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1785), exp. 10; vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30; Manuel Toro and Francisco Manuel Nieto to Viceroy Venegas, Mexico City, Dec. 18, 1810, AGN, Policía, vol. 32, fol. 294.

49. AJT, Penal, vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30.

50. Even convicts working on labor gangs or prisoners in the city jail could buy small amounts of aguardiente or pulque from persons concealing the intoxicants in specially designed belts. AJT, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1796, fols. 87 and 111v; Libro de Reos. Alcaldes de Barrio, nos. 22 and 23, 1798, fol. 27; AGJ, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario menos antiguo, 1807, fol. 21.

51. Sala del Crimen to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, May 28, 1808, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 4, fol. 5.

such days.⁵² The oidores, however, were unable to reach an agreement on a course of action. The arrival of a related royal order in March 1778 initiated discussion throughout the colonial bureaucracy and led to the formulation of a comprehensive program to alter the drinking habits of the poor. Disturbed over reports of widespread drunkenness and crimes emanating from the pulquerías, the king ordered municipal police officials to increase their supervision over these taverns and to adopt measures to eliminate the disorders. If the policy failed to accomplish the desired "radical remedy," a committee composed of the archbishop, regent, customs superintendent, and crown attorney for civil affairs would specify the most effective policies "to put the pulquerías in order."⁵³

The viceroys and audiencias responded to the royal orders by adopting in the next thirty years three different, yet related approaches. One aimed to facilitate the supervision of the taverns. In July 1778, the audiencia proposed the removal of the pulquerías from the outer districts and their relocation within a specified area in the center of the city. Although willing to adopt strong measures to eliminate gambling and illegal beverages, Viceroy Bucareli was reluctant to tamper with the pulquerías. The plan was never implemented.⁵⁴

Royal concern over drunkenness was instrumental in the expansion of the police forces in 1783 and again in 1790. From the sixteenth century, local police magistrates, the *alcaldes del crimen*, *alcaldes ordinarios* and *corregidor*, randomly patrolled the pulquerías, but to insure closer supervision, the first Viceroy Revillagigedo in 1753 assigned specified taverns to each official.⁵⁵ The authorities realized, however, that only through the establishment of minor police officials such as the *alcaldes de barrio* and the *guardafaroleros* could the taverns be patrolled and the drunks arrested.⁵⁶

In addition to intensifying surveillance over the pulque bars, the vice-

52. "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 193; Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, July 20, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 43v.

53. *Instrucción reservada que el conde de Revilla Gigedo, dió a su successor en el mando, marqués de Branciforte* (México, 1831), p. 88; Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria*, II, 357; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 193.

54. Acuerdo, Audiencia, Mexico City, July 20, 1778, AGN, Padrones, vol. 52, fols. 58–58v. By recommending abolishment and relocation of pulquerías, the audiencia was following a policy adopted by the Sala del Crimen in 1753 which removed twelve pulquerías from the inaccessible barrios. AGN, Historia, vol. 573, fols. 41–53.

55. AGN, Civil, vol. 1496, fols. 174–176; AGN, Padrones, vol. 52, fols. 227–228; Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria*, I, part five, XC.

56. "Ordenanza de la division de México en Cuarteles," Viceroy Mayorga, Mexico City, Dec. 4, 1782, AGN, Bandos, vol. 12, fols. 101–124; "Reglamento para el gobierno que ha de observar en el alumbrado de las calles de México," Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Apr. 7, 1790, *ibid.*, vol. 15, fols. 158–160.

roys promulgated a series of laws calling for both the prompt arrest of persons publicly inebriated and the imposition of harsh penalties. In 1793, Revillagigedo reissued the 1748 *bando* which aimed to combat drunkenness by inflicting corporal punishment on the offender. Three years later, Viceroy Branciforte modified the penalties to public works sentences for men and incarceration for women. Viceroy Marquina and the governing audiencia respectively published similar laws in 1800 and 1810.⁵⁷

Of all the measures designed to eliminate intoxication, those attempting to reform the pulquerías and *vinaterías* received the greatest attention. The colonial elites held the drinking places responsible for much of the lower-class undesirable behavior. They were the source of indecency, drunkenness, crime, and such domestic problems as nonsupport and desertion. Husbands spent hours each day drinking and gambling in the taverns, squandering their earnings, or pawning personal and family items to support their depraved habits.⁵⁸ The prior of the consulado described the typical payday for an employed artisan. After receiving his wages, the worker proceeded to a tavern where, in the company of friends, he spent his earnings on drink, women, food, and song. Eventually the group formed a swarm of drunks who then fought with one another for no apparent reason.⁵⁹

The authorities blamed the excessive rate of drunkenness on the taverns since their ambiente and lack of supervision encouraged intemperate consumption. Intoxication, in turn, was the cause of other problems. Prominent physicians attributed the devastating epidemics of 1736–1737 and 1784–1787 to the immoderate use of intoxicants.⁶⁰ Every week the police found tens of bodies of drunks who had stumbled into the waterways that crisscrossed the city, and rarely a week passed without someone dying from overconsumption of aguardiente.⁶¹ Drunkenness also adverse-

57. "Ordenanzas de Pulquerías," Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 25, 1793, *ibid.*, vol. 17, fols. 34v–36; *bando*, Branciforte, Mexico City, July 8, 1796, *ibid.*, vol. 18, fol. 319; *bando*, Viceroy Marquina, Mexico City, Dec. 20, 1800, *ibid.*, vol. 20, fol. 275; *bando*, Audiencia, Mexico City, June 5, 1810, *ibid.*, vol. 25, fol. 103.

58. Sala del Crimen to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Jan. 7, 1806, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 9; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 229.

59. Discurso, Olloquí, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 2, fols. 7–7v.

60. Menocal to Bucareli, Mexico City, Aug. 20, 1772, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 159; Dr. Cayetano Francisco de Torres to Dr. Pedro de Palma Tobón, Mexico City, Dec. 19, 1748, BN, ms. 1186 (23), fol. 2. Also see Donald B. Cooper, *Epidemic Disease in Mexico City, 1761–1813* (Austin, 1965), pp. 78–80.

61. AGN, Historia, vol. 58, exp. 17, fol. 619; Ramón Gutiérrez de Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 7, fol. 135; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 194. Also see AJT, Penal, vol. 6 (1796), exp. 47; AGJ, Penal, vol. 1 (1802), exp. 12.

ly affected the quality of work. It led to high rates of absenteeism, especially in the tobacco factory, and some workers were unable to secure employment in a respectable trade because of their drinking habits.⁶² Revillagigedo blamed the decline in the quality of artisan goods on the high incidence of alcoholism among the skilled workers whom he believed dedicated themselves more to carousing in the taverns than to acquiring more proficient job skills.⁶³

The consulado regarded drunkenness as a domestic enemy and drunks as rebels who had declared war against the well-being of the government. Viceroyalty from the late seventeenth century on blamed the excessive consumption of pulque for the 1692 food riots in Mexico City.⁶⁴ Through a commitment to reform the drinking places and habits, royal and colonial officials hoped to avert any future uprising in the populous capital.

Tavern reform commenced with the pulquerías since the authorities believed them to cause the greatest disorder due to the thousands of customers, especially Indians and *castas*, who frequented them daily.⁶⁵ Until the first decade of the nineteenth century, *vinaterías* were regarded as the more respectable drinking tavern since clientele was primarily Spanish and mestizo.⁶⁶ In response to the 1778 royal order, Viceroy Mayorga established a blue-ribbon pulquería committee which, after a lengthy investigation, issued a detailed report in September 1784 to Viceroy Matías de Gálvez. Attempting to reconcile the need for reform with the need to preserve tax revenues, the committee proposed such measures as limiting the sale of pulque to a maximum of four drinks per customer, reducing the quantity given for the standard price of one-half real, requiring the owner or administrator to sell drinks for cash only, and moving all *vinaterías* a minimum of two blocks from any pulquería.⁶⁷ Until the administration of Revillagigedo, however, the viceroys made no effort to implement the proposals. In November 1791, Revillagigedo forced the reconvened committee to recommend a series of measures to initiate the much needed reform. By eliminating seats, reducing the size

62. AJT, Penal, vol. 3 (1785), exp. 27; AJT, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1796, fol. 106v.

63. *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, pp. 84, 88.

64. Discurso, Olloquí, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 2, fol. 8v; *Instrucción reservada que el obispo-irrey Juan de Ortega Montañés dio a su sucesor en el mando, el Conde de Moctezuma* (Mexico, 1965), pp. 72-73. After the June 1692 uprising, the viceroy prohibited the sale of pulque in Mexico City, although five years later Viceroy Moctezuma legalized the sale of unadulterated *pulque blanco*. AGN, Historia, vol. 573, fols. 1-21v.

65. Superior orden, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 22, 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 125-125v.

66. AAA, Policía. Seguridad, vol. 1, exp. 43.

67. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 234-235.

of the pulquerías, and prohibiting the sale of pulque after sunset, the committee and viceroy believed the disorders associated with the pulquerías would be largely corrected without impeding the use of pulque or undermining the financial position of the tavern owners. Needing royal approval, Revillagigedo informed Charles IV of the proposals, but the king never responded. Once again, bureaucratic lethargy thwarted the committee's efforts. Royal will did not necessarily mean royal action.⁶⁸

Determined to proceed with the reform on his own, Revillagigedo issued various orders between December 1792 and February 1793 to enforce the existing pulquería ordinances of 1671 and 1752. What began as an effort to implement two articles of the ordinances ended as an attempt to vigorously enforce all the regulations. The viceroy's solution to alcohol abuse was to remove the incentives leading to excessive drinking, but he realized that the reform would have to proceed slowly. In a letter to the principal police magistrates, he stated:

It is not easy, nor at times convenient to remedy with one blow . . . all the disorders that have become habitual and ingrained in the customs and lifestyles of the greater part of a People; but it can be attained little by little with adequate and sustained measures.

This is the situation in which we find ourselves with the pulquerías: for their government and management they have very just regulations: but neglected and tepid enthusiasm in their enforcement over a long time has produced all the resulting excesses.⁶⁹

A political and social realist, Revillagigedo foresaw the failure of a "radical remedy" to the problem, given the nature of the lower classes and the pulquería owners.

The viceroy's piecemeal program began on December 4 when he ordered the enforcement of the regulations prohibiting the consumption of food within the pulquerías and the sale of food in the surrounding block.⁷⁰ Investigations into the eating houses showed that almost all forty-three pulquerías sold food to their customers and were encircled by numerous *almuercerías* as well as women selling tortillas and tamales from baskets or portable stalls. Within three days of the viceregal decree,

68. *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, pp. 88–90.

69. Revillagigedo to Francisco Saavedra, Mexico City, Dec. 30, 1792, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 60–61.

70. "Ordenanzas de Pulquerías," Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 25, 1793, AGN, Bandos, vol. 17, fols. 37–37v.

the *alcaldes de barrio* had removed most of these establishments. Although most owners offered no complaints, some women protested bitterly, explaining that the only respectable way they could support themselves and their families was to sell food to the pulquería customers. One group of indignant women, underlining their inability to provide for their children if the order remained enforced, went as far as to give their offspring to the police officials. Concerned with the precarious financial status of the women who sold food from their apartments or restaurants, Revillagigedo permitted them to return to their former places of residence and work, prohibiting only the sale of food by itinerant vendors. He believed the ordinances would be enforced over a period of time by not allowing any new eating houses in the areas contiguous to the pulquerías. Upon returning to their homes and stores, however, the proprietors of the eating establishments attempted to circumvent the law. Not only did they allow the customers to carry food to the pulquerías, but they also let the bartenders bring pulque to their stores so the customers' drinking would not be disrupted. On December 30, the viceroy declared such behavior illegal.⁷¹

Revillagigedo understood that the success of the reform program depended upon the ability to make it impossible, if not just difficult, for customers to linger in the pulquerías. Eliminating all food was one method. Another was to remove the thousands of seats and benches that were scattered in forty of the pulquerías.⁷² One magistrate noted that the pulquerías in his district abided by the food regulations, but that they were full of vicious people who did nothing save drink and sleep throughout the day. In response, Revillagigedo on January 1 ordered the magistrates and *alcaldes de barrio* to dismantle all structures in the pulquerías that served as resting places. Enforcement of the decree was hopeless, however, as many administrators refused to comply. In order to save the faltering reform, Revillagigedo issued another order on January 10 which neglected to mention the issue of seats, but emphasized instead the administrators' responsibility to prevent the customers from lingering

71. Ibid., fols. 36–38; Saavedra to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 8, 1792, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 19–19v; Alcaldes de barrio, nos. 17–20, to Jacobo Villa Urrutía, Mexico City, Dec. 7, 1792, ibid., fols. 20–20v; Yrisarri to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 10, 1792, ibid., fol. 34; Saavedra to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 28, 1792, ibid., fols. 58–59; superior orden, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 30, 1792, ibid., fols. 63–63v.

72. Lista general de las pulquerías que hay en esta ciudad y sus barrios, Valenzuela to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 31, 1792, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fol. 69. In the early 1780s, only twenty of the forty pulquerías had seats and benches. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 210–211.

after consuming the pulque. For the viceroy, the purpose of the tavern was to sell liquor. With no loitering, there would be no disturbances.⁷³

The reaction was swift. Speaking for the majority of the *arrendatarios*, a group of seven tenants sent a letter to Revillagigedo criticizing his reforms as detrimental to their livelihood and impossible to enforce. They thought the practice of remaining in the pulquerías was an ingrained custom among the urban poor since the taverns provided much needed relaxation and sociability. They complained about their inability to enforce the measure, and even if they forced the administrators to keep the crowd moving, the customers would rebel. Pleading poverty if the decree were enforced, the tenants asked the viceroy to rescind the order.⁷⁴

Revillagigedo refused to yield on this point. He reissued the January 10 order and informed the *arrendatarios* that he would not tolerate any contravention of the pulquería ordinances in their taverns. To further implement the decree, he empowered the police to remove any known employed worker from the pulquerías if he lingered too long before work in the morning or during his mid-morning and afternoon breaks.⁷⁵

Although initially concerned with the regulations on food, seats, and loitering, the reform expanded into other areas as it progressed. In implementing the decrees of early December, the magistrates uncovered other infractions of the pulquería ordinances: lack of a torch at night, sale of pulque after sunset, gambling, playing of music, and dancing. On December 25, Revillagigedo encouraged the magistrates to investigate all abuses committed in the pulquerías, not just those pertaining to food and seating. To facilitate enforcement of the regulations, he reprinted and distributed sufficient copies of the ordinances to all magistrates, *alcaldes de barrio*, and pulquería administrators of the city. No one, either policeman or *arrendatario*, could feign ignorance of the law.⁷⁶

With the exception of the January 1 decree concerning the removal

73. Saavedra to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 28, 1792, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 58–59; superior orden, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 1, 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 72–72v; Valenzuela to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 3, 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 81–81v; superior orden, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 10, 1793, *ibid.*, fol. 94.

74. Arrendatarios de Pulque de México to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 116–119v.

75. Superior oficio, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 22, 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 125–125v; superior oficio, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Feb. 5, 1793, *ibid.*, fol. 138.

76. Superior oficio, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 25, 1792, *ibid.*, fol. 49; Urrutía to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 26, 1792, *ibid.*, fols. 52–52v; superior orden, Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Feb. 5, 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 141–143; “Ordenanzas de Pulquerías,” Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 25, 1793, AGN, Bandos, vol. 17, fols. 31–38. The pulquería committee formed in the early 1780s concluded that the scarcity of copies of the ordinances was a contributing factor to the disorder in the administration of the pulque taverns. “Informe sobre pulquerías,” p. 203.

of seats from the pulquerías, the police vigorously enforced the laws in the early stages of the reform. From December to February, they mounted special patrols to apprehend transgressors and to implement the vice-regal measures. As late as April, they arrested numerous customers and administrators and brought several formal criminal charges for such offenses as sitting in the pulquerías, selling food, accepting pawns, and selling pulque after sunset.⁷⁷ Upon leaving office in 1794, Revillagigedo commented to his successor that the pulquerías were no longer the cause of intoxication and other criminal offenses for which they had been held responsible previously.⁷⁸

Enforcement of the pulquería ordinances became lax after his administration. The *libros de reos* do not list one arrest for violation of the ordinances between 1795 and 1807. Viceroy Branciforte in 1796 registered official acknowledgement of the reform's failure when he issued a new law on drunkenness.⁷⁹ By the late 1790s, former complaints about the disorder emanating from the pulquerías once again appear in the records: women openly selling food inside the tavern, customers lingering all day, fighting, gambling, and dancing.⁸⁰ The state of the pulquerías had deteriorated to such an extent that the consulado in 1807 called for the adoption of new measures to reform these drinking establishments.⁸¹

One factor undermining the pulquería reform of the early 1790s was the failure of Revillagigedo and his successors to take strong action against the hundreds of *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías*. The reform did not so much temporarily end the disorder in the pulquerías as it forced many drinkers who normally went to the pulquerías to frequent instead the illegal taverns where they could buy food and linger with little harassment from the police or owner. The decline in sales in the pulquerías in the last decade of the eighteenth century was probably the result of this change in drinking habits among the poor.⁸²

The viceroys traditionally relied on police vigilance and court penalties to eradicate the *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías*. In 1800, Viceroy

77. Urrutía to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 7, 1792, Policía, vol. 19, fols. 21–22; Antonio Méndez Prieto to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Dec. 27, 1892, *ibid.*, fols. 57–57v; Urrutía to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 25, 1793, *ibid.*, fols. 115–116; Valenzuela to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, March 27, 1793, *ibid.*, fol. 197.

78. *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, p. 90.

79. Bando, Branciforte, Mexico City, July 8, 1796, AGN, Bandos, vol. 18, fol. 319.

80. Antonio Rodríguez de Velasco to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, May 1794, AGN, Policía, vol. 15, fols. 3–3v; *ibid.*, vol. 32, fols. 210–213; AGJ, Penal, vol. 1 (1802), exp. 23; vol. 2 (1803), exp. 2. Also see bando, Viceroy Calleja, Mexico City, Sept. 18, 1812, AGN, Bandos, vol. 25, fol. 115.

81. Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, July 20, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 49–49v.

82. AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 117, exp. 6, fols. 17v–20.

Azanza ordered the customs guards and pulquería owners to assist the magistrates by reporting the entry of all contraband and its sale in illegal taverns. He also modified the penalties listed in the 1760 decree on unsanctioned drinking places. Whereas the earlier law called for exile, presidio sentences, or, for non-Spaniards, lashes, the 1800 *bando* stipulated three days incarceration for the first offense, fifteen days public works for men and *recogimiento* (female house of correction) for women for the second offense, and two months of the respective penalties for the third offense. Additional arrests would be punished by exile or penal servitude. In all cases, the police were required to destroy the intoxicant and break the container.⁸³

Lax police enforcement and moderated court sentences rendered the laws ineffective. A fine of three to five pesos was the customary sentence for both customers and proprietors with incarceration and public works infrequently used as corrective measures. The *libros de reos* also show that the courts released a high percentage of the offenders: twenty-six percent of the owners and thirty-eight percent of the customers. Moreover, the police did not always destroy the intoxicant as required. In most cases, the proprietor was never apprehended, and the police allowed him or her to continue the business. One case typifies police and judicial inaction. The patrol of the *alcalde ordinario menos antiguo* raided one particular *tepachería* three times in one month, but in each instance the police failed to arrest the owner and the court freed the customers.⁸⁴

As incentive to enforce the law, the arresting officer received one-third of the fine levied by the judge. The magistrates thought the monetary sentences would be more effective in closing the illegal bars than the sentences prescribed by the ordinances. They were wrong. The incentive was not enough to entice the police into enforcing the laws in their districts. With bribery rampant among the police, especially the *guardafaroleros* and assistants to the *alcaldes de barrio* (*ministros de vara*), it is likely that the owners of the illegal taverns paid them a weekly fee for protection from prosecution.⁸⁵ Police arrest practices reflect this supposition. Although the *guardafaroleros* walked through their small

83. Buenaventura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria*, I, part five, DCXVIII; bando, Vice-roy Azanza, Jan. 11, 1800, AGN, Bandos, vol. 20, fol. 161. Azanza also closed most *casas de pulque* in the neighboring jurisdictions of Tacuba, Coyoacán, and Guadalupe. The illegal taverns reappeared within a decade. AGN, Policía, vol. 32, fols. 159–207v.

84. AGJ, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario menos antiguo, 1807, fols. 14–14v, 17v–18, 26v.

85. Arrendatarios de Pulque de México to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Jan. 1793, AGN, Policía, vol. 19, fol. 118; AJT, Penal, vol. 6 (1796), exp. 37; vol. 7 (1797), exp. 22; vol. 12 (1810), exps. 62 and 64; AJT, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1796, fol. 71v.

districts nightly and had the opportunity to know firsthand about the existence of any illegal taverns, they did not make any arrests in these drinking places for the years when police records exist. According to the *libros de reos*, even the officers of the night police corps apprehended only three percent of the offenders. Patrols formed by the *teniente de alguacil mayor* (deputy constable), the two *alcaldes ordinarios*, and the *alcaldes de barrios* accounted for more than nine of every ten arrests in the *casas de pulque* and *tepacherías*. Despite their complaints concerning the existence of the illegal taverns, the colonial authorities made no concerted effort to remove them from Mexico City. Little wonder the viceroy's principal legal counsel concluded in 1800 that present methods of eradicating these "houses of perdition" were woefully inadequate.⁸⁶

The viceroys and audiencias gave much more attention to the *vina-terías* and other establishments selling hard liquor. They limited their reform measures before the late 1790s primarily to restricting the sale of aguardiente and wine between sunrise and nine o'clock in the evening. The authorities concentrated most of their energy on the pulquerías during these years, maintaining that the only serious problems in the aguardiente taverns resulted from the sale of intoxicants during curfew hours.⁸⁷ Their attitude changed after the legalization of colonial manufactured aguardiente in December 1796. Realizing that the high price of Spanish brandy spurred demand for illegal colonial *chinguirito* which in turn meant a loss of tax revenues, the crown approved the manufacture of local aguardiente and levied a tax of three pesos and one real on each barrel registered by customs officials.⁸⁸

Legalization benefited the treasury, but its effects on the drinking habits of the lower classes were disastrous. Commenting on alcohol abuse among the urban poor, officials of the consulado lamented that "the excesses of intoxication increase daily, especially since the year of 1796 in which the manufacture of *aguardiente de caña* was permitted in this

86. Fiscal de lo civil to Marquina, Mexico City, July 9, 1800, AGN, Policía, vol. 32, fol. 202.

87. Bando, Viceroy Croix, Mexico City, Oct. 1, 1766, AJT, Penal, vol. 7 (1797), exp. 12; auto acordado, Sala del Crimen, Mexico City, Oct. 31, 1722, *ibid.*, vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30; AGN, Historia, vol. 60, exp. 2, fols. 29v-30; circular, Marquina, Mexico City, Aug. 10, 1801, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 27-27v.

88. Bando with cédula, Branciforte, Mexico City, Dec. 9, 1796, AGN, Bandos, vol. 18, fols. 426-439v; Los Comisionados de Comercio de España to Revillagigedo, Mexico City, Mar.-July 1792, AGN, Policía, vol. 27, fols. 1-13v. While the price of a barrel of colonial aguardiente ranged between twenty and twenty-five pesos, Spanish brandy cost between thirty and fifty-five pesos per barrel. Viceroys Croix and Revillagigedo earlier had called for the legalization of *aguardiente de caña*. Angel de Cuevas to Mayorga, Mexico City, Jan. 28, 1783, AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 194, exp. 14; *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, p. 101.

Kingdom.”⁸⁹ With falling prices, consumption of the highly intoxicating aguardiente rose sixty percent between 1797 and 1804. Its growing popularity was also reflected in the jump in the number of *vinaterías* from 194 in 1784 to almost 800 twenty-three years later. Evidence of greater consumption can best be seen in the *libros de reos*. In 1796, the last year that colonial aguardiente was illegal, the *guardafaroleros* arrested 816 men and women for inebriation. Two years later, they apprehended 1,750 drunks, a 114 percent increase, and in 1810 they arrested 2,668 drunks. From 1796 to 1810, the number of arrests for public intoxication rose at an alarming rate of 227 percent.⁹⁰ In the words of the prior of the consulado, it had become necessary by 1807 “to put the dikes on the torrent of intoxication that inundates this populous city.” He attributed this to the excessive consumption of aguardiente, not pulque.⁹¹ As Indians increasingly took to the hard liquor, the *vinatería* lost its earlier reputation as the more civilized drinking establishment. The Sala del Crimen now considered the *vinaterías* to pose a more serious threat to public order than the pulquerías.⁹² Consequently, the first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed a long debate over the most suitable measures to stem the rising tide of drunkenness caused by the aguardiente taverns. But like the pulquería reform of the early 1790s, the *vinatería* reform ended in failure.

The changing nature and growing numbers of *vinaterías* led members of the city’s civil and ecclesiastical organizations to call for the development of a code of conduct or ordinance for the aguardiente taverns. After six years of debate, procrastination, misplaced viceregal and royal decrees, and a coup d’état, the audiencia, as interim executive, promulgated on June 5, 1810, a regulation for the administration of *vinaterías* and other establishments selling aguardiente and wine.⁹³

The key measures in the *reglamento* were the abolition of *zangarros* and the restriction of *vinaterías* to a specified area in the center of the city. The area delineated comprised the interior minor administrative districts of major districts I–IV, although *vinaterías* were also allowed on

89. Consulado to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Mar. 15, 1808, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fol. 92.

90. The number of *guardafaroleros* remained relatively constant in this period. For the 1810 arrest figure, see Vicente Reyna to Mazo, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 7, fol. 127.

91. Discurso, Olloqui, June 6, 1807, *ibid.*, exp. 2, fol. 5.

92. Sala del Crimen to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Jan. 7, 1806, *ibid.*, exp. 1, fols. 9v–10; “Informe sobre pulquerías,” p. 370.

93. Bando, Audiencia, Mexico City, June 5, 1810, AGN, Bandos, vol. 25, fol. 103.

three heavily traveled thoroughfares leading out of the city.⁹⁴ The centralization of aguardiente taverns into one zone facilitated police supervision and impeded the transit of customers between the pulquerías in the outer districts and the *vinaterías*. Not all members of the late colonial bureaucracy approved of this solution. The attorney for the royal treasury, its most vigorous opponent, claimed the removal of all *vinaterías* from the barrios endangered the upper-class citizens since the tavern disorders would subsequently be concentrated near their residences. Moreover, the extinction of the *zangarros* was harmful to the many proprietors from reputable families whose small business was their only means of support.⁹⁵ Expressing the majority opinion, the crown attorney for civil affairs maintained that the ultimate success of the law depended upon the elimination of the *zangarros* which, virtually free of police surveillance, were the origin of the most heinous crimes.⁹⁶

Two additional measures in the *reglamento* facilitated police supervision and enforcement. The sale of aguardiente and wine was restricted to *vinaterías*, coffee houses, and *fondas*. All other retail establishments such as *tiendas mestizas*, *pulperías*, and *almuercerías* were thenceforth prohibited from selling intoxicants.⁹⁷ Through these steps, the law reduced the number of legal taverns by over three hundred, making possible more frequent police patrols to the remaining number of drinking places. The audiencia, overriding the objection of the viceregal legal advisor on military affairs, surmounted another obstacle to proper enforcement by denying military privilege (*fuero militar*) to any soldier-*vinatero* who violated the *vinatería* ordinance.⁹⁸

Other measures were obvious adaptations from the pulquería ordinances. Pawning, gambling, playing music, dancing, and adding noxious ingredients to the intoxicants were prohibited. Like the pulquerías, the aguardiente taverns could not open before one o'clock in the afternoon on Sundays and holy days, and customers could remain in the tavern for only as long as it took to consume their drink. Out of consideration for

94. One street ran through the middle of *cuarteles menores* 21 and 23 to the western edge of the city, another from the Plaza de Santo Domingo northward to the middle of minor districts 2 and 15, and the third from minor districts 12 and 18 to the city gate of San Antonio de Abad at the southern perimeter of the capital.

95. Borbón to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Jan. 30, 1806, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 16–22v.

96. Sagarzurieta to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Mar. 30, 1808, *ibid.*, fol. 97v.

97. The ineffective January 11, 1800 viceregal decree also prohibited the sale of pulque in these establishments; Bando, Azanza, AGN, Bandos, vol. 20, fol. 161.

98. Auditor de Guerra to Iturrigaray, Mexico City, Apr. 26, 1807, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 1, fols. 36–39v.

the many poor who needed pulque on Sundays and religious holidays for medicinal purposes, the *audiencia*, on June 16, modified the regulation to allow for the maximum sale of one real of pulque before one o'clock to persons who brought their own drinking vessels.⁹⁹

These measures were not warmly received. In the following months, the *audiencia* was swamped with petitions by owners of *vinaterías* outside the zone and by owners of *pulperías* requesting permission to continue to sell intoxicants in their establishments. One proprietor, embittered over the failure to eradicate the illegal taverns, estimated that implementation of the *reglamento* would financially destroy more than 600 families.¹⁰⁰ In response to the public outcry, the consulado and crown attorney for civil affairs proposed modifications in the law. The merchants wanted to enlarge the designated zone to include many of the petitioners' establishments. The attorney, while not accepting the amplified zone, thought the viceroy should allow honorable men to establish at least twenty-five *vinaterías* outside the district. Both the consulado and royal attorney had fought for the reform in previous years, but each was willing to moderate its position in order to inflict less harm on the *vinateros*. While the debate continued, the magistrates gradually closed *aguardiente* taverns outside the zone. By February 1811, only 245 *vinaterías* remained in the city, a decrease of 539 since 1807.¹⁰¹

To settle the confusion over the future course of the reform, Viceroy Venegas appointed Corregidor Ramón Gutiérrez de Mazo, as chief of the Junta de Policía, to conduct an inquiry into the implementation of the 1810 law. His reply of March 20, 1811, was much more than a report of his findings as it also proposed measures he considered necessary for the successful outcome of the reform.¹⁰² Mazo discovered that the law did not bring about its desired effects. Instead of decreasing, the rate of drunkenness continued to climb in 1810, an unfortunate trend he attributed to the still excessive number of taverns selling hard liquor. The drastic reduction in the number of *vinaterías* was insufficient, Mazo contended, particularly when only forty-eight bakeries and fifty-three butcher shops supplied the city's needs for bread and meat.¹⁰³ To further limit

99. Decreto, Audiencia, Mexico City, June 16, 1810, *ibid.*, fols. 144–144v.

100. Letter of Juan José Taboada, Mexico City, *ibid.*, exp. 7, fol. 64. See expediente 9 for numerous petitions.

101. Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, *ibid.*, exp. 7, fols. 128–129; Consulado to Venegas, Mexico City, Oct. 13, 1810, *ibid.*, fols. 65–66v; Francisco Xavier Benítez to Mazo, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, *ibid.*, fol. 124.

102. For the complete report, see Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, *ibid.*, fols. 123v–145.

103. Despite his desire to reduce the number of *vinaterías*, Mazo proposed that proprietors of *pulperías* be allowed to resume the sale of intoxicants since they generally

the aguardiente taverns, Mazo proposed two measures, one of which was to grant licenses to *vinateros* who could verify a minimum investment of 1,500 pesos in their taverns. All *vinaterías* appraised under this amount would close within one month, thus insuring the effective suppression of the *zangarros*. After determining the number of *vinaterías* needed to supply the capital, the corregidor, as administrator of the program, would force the remainder, even if valued at more than 1,500 pesos each, to shut down within six months.

The second proposal would empower the corregidor to distribute the licenses and approve *vinaterías* in any part of the city, thereby abolishing the district designated in 1810. The criteria for location were accessibility for police patrols, ample street lighting, and the neighborhood's need for an adequate supply of liquid nourishment. Like the bakeries and butcher shops, the number of *vinaterías* would be strictly limited, and they would be strategically scattered throughout all sections of the city.

Mazo acknowledged that more drastic and extraordinary measures had to be taken to counteract the increasing incidence of drunkenness. To this end, he proposed that no intoxicants be drunk inside the *vinaterías* and pulquerías or within 110 feet from the tavern entrances. Anyone wanting pulque, aguardiente, or wine would have to supply his own container. Similar to retail outlets that sold prepared food, such as *tortillerías* and *atolerías*, the drinking places would be converted into stores that merely dispensed a product to be consumed in the home. Mazo maintained that the congregation of drinkers in the taverns led to excessive drinking and that the principal weakness of the pulquería reform was the reluctance to prohibit the consumption of intoxicants on the premises. Not even tripling the number of police would have enforced the loitering measures.

The corregidor understood that the effective implementation of his proposals would drastically reduce the consumption of aguardiente and pulque among the poor. This was, however, the price that viceregal and royal authorities had to pay to curtail drunkenness in the capital. Although decreased consumption would result in lower tax revenues, it would not in the long run be detrimental to the royal treasury. Monies traditionally spent on intoxicants would be used instead to buy food and clothing which ultimately would double the duties and sales tax levied on these products. Convinced by the logic of the proposals, Viceroy Venegas published them on September 9, 1811, as an amendment to the 1810 *bando*.

sold aguardiente in limited quantities at reduced prices to customers who drank the beverage for medicinal purposes. Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 7, fols. 132v-133v.

Reaction to the viceregal order was hostile. On the following day, a group of hacendados and pulquería proprietors, led by the influential widow of the Conde de Regla, formally complained to the viceroy that the law, if implemented, would undermine personal and royal interests. Decreased consumption of pulque meant the closure of the pulquerías since the owners and tenants could no longer meet expenses. It would also cause the bankruptcy of the maguey haciendas, force thousands of farm laborers out of work, and reduce royal tax revenue. Although they would obey the law, the petitioners maintained that viceregal suspension of the new measures would better serve the interests of the entire city and colony.¹⁰⁴

Moved by their argument, Venegas suspended the law on September 30 pending an investigation into their claims. He ordered the petitioners to expound upon the liabilities of the new measures after which the consulado, corregidor, audiencia, and crown attorney for civil affairs would pass judgement.¹⁰⁵ Venegas declared the June 1810 regulation to remain in effect, but mass confusion resulted. Under the pretext that the 1810 law had been suspended, many former proprietors of *vinaterías* and *zangarros* reopened their establishments. By the end of 1811, the state of the aguardiente tavern was comparable to its unruly condition in the decade before the 1810 law.¹⁰⁶ Nothing was done during the independence wars to close the *vinaterías* on the outskirts or to implement the corregidor's proposals. In 1816, a new movement to reissue and enforce the 1810 ordinance was greeted with apathy by the viceroy. And under the correct assumption that the issue would be forgotten, the hacendados and pulquería proprietors never submitted a detailed account of their complaints.¹⁰⁷ The 1810 and 1811 laws remained dead letters.

The pulquería and *vinatería* reforms of the late colonial period accomplished little. Royal and colonial authorities were unable to translate their disgust for alcohol abuse among the poor and their fear of the social instability it caused into lasting and effective action. Several factors worked against the success of the tavern reforms. The colonial governments, both viceregal and municipal, lacked the means to enforce the reform measures. The *alcaldes de barrio* and *guardafaroleros* were bur-

104. Los cosecheros y tratantes de Pulques to Venegas, Mexico City, Sept. 28, 1811, *ibid.*, exp. 11, fols. 1–2v.

105. Aviso público, Venegas, Mexico City, Sept. 30, 1811, *ibid.*, fol. 3; acuerdo, Audiencia, Mexico City, Nov. 18, 1811, *ibid.*, fols. 11–12.

106. Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Oct. 9, 1811, *ibid.*, fols. 7–10v. Also see letter of Juan Rubi, Mexico City, *ibid.*, fols. 17–17v.

107. Conde de Casa de Heras to Calleja, Mexico City, Aug. 27, 1816, *ibid.*, exp. 12, fols. 2–3. See letter of Nov. 10, 1816 to Calleja, *ibid.*, fols. 5–6; Sagarzurieta to Viceroy Apodaca, Dec. 31, 1816, *ibid.*, fols. 7–9v.

dened with a myriad of administrative duties, corruption and incompetence were rampant within the lowly paid night police force, and approximately one-quarter of the unsalaried *alcaldes de barrio* also owned or managed taverns and consequently would not vigorously enforce laws that were prejudicial to their only means of support.¹⁰⁸

Another factor responsible for the failure of the tavern reforms was the various groups, including the viceregal and municipal governments, which had a vested interest in the continuation of high consumption of intoxicants. The pulquería committee of the 1780s complained that the proprietors of the pulquerías and the maguey haciendas prevented effective enforcement of the law. With investments running into the millions of pesos, they protected their tenants at any cost, and the courts and police could not take action against the tenants unless they possessed overwhelming evidence.¹⁰⁹ The ploy developed by the owners and hacendados to forestall the implementation of the 1811 *bando* underlines their ability to subvert the law. Effective enforcement of the reforms would have undermined some of the colony's most influential and respected citizens.

Even though government officials deplored the taverns and the incidence of drinking, they realized that the consumption of pulque and aguardiente raised considerable tax revenue for the royal and municipal treasuries. The sales tax on pulque earned the royal coffers an average of 600,000 pesos annually in the 1770s and 1780s and 800,000 pesos annually in the 1790s and early 1800s.¹¹⁰ Special duties periodically placed on pulque generated revenue for such specific purposes as the purchase of militia uniforms, war expenses, salaries for employees of the Sala del Crimen and Acordada, street maintenance and paving costs, and sick relief during the 1797–1798 smallpox epidemic.¹¹¹ The revenue-rai-

108. AGN, Ayuntamiento, vol. 107, exp. 3, fols. 13–23, 32–33; vol. 177, exp. 10; vol. 191, exp. 3; vol. 192, exps. 3 and 7; vol. 194, exp. 2; vol. 211, exp. 8; vol. 219, fols. 212, 314; AGN, Policía, vol. 15, fols. 245–288v; AJT, Penal, vol. 4 (1791), exp. 59; vol. 5 (1791), exp. 30. Among other duties, the *alcaldes de barrio* and *guardafaroleros* served as dogcatchers, fire inspectors, census takers, and bodyguards for doctors and priests. See AGN, Bandos, vol. 12, fols. 101–124 and vol. 15, fols. 158–160.

109. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 234–235 and 366.

110. von Humboldt, *Political Essay*, IV, 209–216; *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, pp. 279–280; "Informe sobre pulquerías," p. 386; Juan Rodríguez de San Miguel, ed., *Pandectas hispano-megicanas, ó sea Código general comprensivo de las leyes generales, útiles y vivas de las Siete partidas, Recopilación novísima, la de Indias, autos y providencias conocidas de Montemayor y Beleña, y cédulas posteriores hasta el año de 1820*, 3 vols. (México, 1839–1840), I, 722.

111. "Informe sobre pulquerías," pp. 230–232; *bando*, Mayorga, Mexico City, Sept. 18, 1780, AGN, Bandos, vol. 11, fol. 196; AGN, Policía, vol. 33, fols. 212–214, 239–246, 309; AGN, Historia, vol. 59, exp. 11, fols. 592–594, 605; vol. 60, exp. 1, fols. 6–7; *Instrucción . . . Revilla Gigedo*, p. 280; Cooper, *Epidemic Disease*, pp. 140–141.

ing capability of pulque was so great that the city government permitted the sale of the intoxicant in several municipal markets despite its contravention of the pulquería ordinances. By leasing pulque stalls in the markets, the government earned almost 17,000 pesos annually in the 1790s, more than one-half the total expenditure on public works projects in 1794. The futility of reform is evidenced by the construction of additional government-controlled pulque stalls during Revillagigedo's campaign to enforce the pulquería ordinances.¹¹²

The tax monies generated from aguardiente consumption were not as fruitful, but they were spent on necessary projects. In the eight years after legalization, the sales tax on aguardiente brought in a yearly average of 22,515 pesos. More productive was the *sisá*, or municipal tax, which annually amounted to 41,385 pesos and which went for the upkeep of the city water supply system. The municipal government contended that without the tax and high rate of consumption, the already inadequate water system would cease to operate.¹¹³

Due to the primary importance of the alcohol taxes, government officials on all levels blunted any effort to insure strict compliance with the reform measures. Viceroy Venegas' prompt suppression of the 1811 *bando* can be understood only in this context. The crown and the viceroys wanted to curtail drunkenness among the poor, but not at the expense of needed revenue. The financial value of intoxicants far outweighed the detrimental social consequences of their consumption. Given the choice between reform or revenue, the colonial authorities did not opt for reforms.

The last, and perhaps most significant factor which undermined the tavern legislation was the function performed by intoxicating beverages in the daily life of the urban poor. Important human values in the lower-class subculture made alcohol consumption difficult to regulate. The laws restricting lingering in the pulquerías and *vinaterías*, for example, were unenforceable since the authorities did not understand the recreational and social functions played by the taverns. As in the villages, moreover, heavy drinking in the capital was common on Sundays and religious holidays, and consequently the reform measures restricting the sale of intoxicants on these days conflicted with a well ingrained lower-class rural and urban custom.¹¹⁴ Such drinking habits, values, and attitudes were

112. AGN, Policía, vol. 15, fols. 116–166v; vol. 20, fol. 224; Mier to Branciforte, Mexico City, Feb. 19, 1798, *ibid.*, vol. 31, fol. 104; AGN, Historia, vol. 60, exp. 12, fol. 96.

113. AGN, Policía, vol. 32, fol. 239. Also see bando, Mayorga, Mexico City, Jan. 8, 1781. AGN, Bandos, vol. 11, fol. 271.

114. For village drinking patterns, see Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*, pp. 58–59.

known and agreed upon by most of the poor through such socializing agencies as the family and peer groups. Corregidor Mazo lamented the teaching of excessive drinking habits to children within the family.¹¹⁵ In all seriousness, the prior of the consulado quantitatively demonstrated this point. He calculated that through imitation, drinking customs were transmitted to succeeding generations, as one habitually drunken father with three sons produced 9,840 alcoholics in eight generations.¹¹⁶ Immoderate drinking patterns were often learned in the home as testimonies in criminal cases indicate, but such behavior was also reinforced outside the family. In a popular game, young boys playing in the streets commonly feigned drunkenness.¹¹⁷ By participating in this game, boys acted out accepted adult roles.

Like other European and American cities, Mexico City was plagued by the immoderate drinking habits and the resulting disruptive behavior of its lower classes. However, in no other major city was there such a direct and dramatic attack on alcohol abuse as in the Mexican capital. The colonial authorities clearly identified the relationship between an intemperate urban populace and the maintenance of social and political order. Yet the reform of the drinking places had little effect on the drinking customs of the poor and, in fact, the late colonial period marks the beginning of a sharp upswing in alcohol abuse in Mexico City. Police arrest records from the 1840s show a forty-one percent increase in the rate of arrests for intoxication over the late 1790s, a more impressive figure since police supervision remained relatively constant and perhaps even deteriorated over the years.¹¹⁸ As judicial accounts and other sources clearly show, alcohol abuse continued to be an integral part of lower class urban life well into the nineteenth century.

115. Mazo to Venegas, Mexico City, Mar. 20, 1811, AGN, Civil, vol. 2126, exp. 7, fol. 135.

116. Discurso, Olloquí, Mexico City, June 6, 1807, *ibid.*, exp. 2, fol. 5.

117. AJT, Libro de Reos. Alcalde ordinario mas antiguo, 1798, fol. 35v.

118. For the 1840s data, see Frederick John Shaw, Jr., "Poverty and Politics in Mexico City, 1824-1854" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Florida, 1975), pp. 38-39, 275.