Item #12

Christoph Rosenmüller, *Patrons, Partisans, and Palace Intrigues: The Court Society of Colonial Mexico, 1702-1710* (Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2008), 29-51.

3

Court and Corruption in Colonial Mexico

In the past forty-five years, historiography has paid increasing attention to the problem of corruption in early modern Europe and America. The current debate involves three main questions: how to explain the endemic non-compliance with the law or other ethical guidelines; how contemporaries viewed corruption; and whether the term *corruption* is applicable to the *ancien régime*. In order to evaluate the extent to which a viceroy's tenure in office can be characterized as corrupt, it is necessary to understand the broader framework of this phenomenon and clarify the terminology concerning it.

Among the first scholars to discuss the subject comprehensively within the Spanish Empire was Dutch historian Jacob van Klaveren.[1] He argued that bureaucrats and municipal aristocrats who controlled the enforcement of trade laws willingly accepted bribes to suspend these regulations to the detriment of merchants, the crown, and the public. Only when merchants evaded paying customary kickbacks did bureaucrats and municipal aristocrats intervene, ostensibly in defence of royal prerogatives. Van Klaveren postulated that the corruption of the executive violated the principles of mercantilism, the idea of a freer flow of merchandise within the realm and the exclusion of foreign goods. Ultimately, he described corruption as a conflict among crown, bureaucracy, nobility, merchants, and others over the access to the country's wealth. Soon after van Klaveren's book was published, Ramón Carande and Richard Konetzke, both prestigious economic historians of Spain and her empire, challenged these conclusions. The scholars attacked the Dutch historian for not having documented his conclusions concerning

corruption with primary sources. In their view the series of *juicios de residencia* located in the Archive of the Indies demonstrate that the state successfully reined in this abuse.[2]

In Anglophone historiography, John Leddy Phelan distinguishes between the legal or moral ideal of a loyal bureaucracy and the de facto systematic circumvention of the law.[3] Phelan holds that "[t]he basic cause of the considerable avarice throughout the bureaucracy was the inadequacy of the salary scale."[4] Among the lower ranks, in which individuals had no prospect of adequate remuneration, massive corruption prevailed. Officials receiving a better salary inclined somewhat less towards corruption. Therefore, "the viceroys [were] as a group remarkably honest."[5] Royal officials, however, usually had no hope for promotion, a salary raise, or reliable and significant retirement benefits. Once they had set foot in the New World, royal ministers were there to stay, and, torn from their cultural moorings, were ripe for moral decay.[6] Phelan argues that the pervasiveness of corruption in Spain's empire was partly a structural problem. Nonetheless, he continues to view corruption, to a degree, as an individual moral problem.

Horst Pietschmann maintains that widespread corruption existed in Europe but pervaded the Indies more thoroughly.[7] Pietschmann identifies four forms of corruption in the empire: illegal trade, bribery, favouritism and clientelism, as well as the sale of offices and official services. For him corruption is not a static concept. Its pervasiveness changes over time. He points out that in the mid-sixteenth century, the crown began selling offices. Consequently, the officeholders increasingly diverged from the legal mandates. At the same time venality opened avenues of social advancement for Creoles. From 1710 onward, after the crackdown on Alburquerque and several inspections of the treasury and the *audiencia*, the monarch progressively reined in the administrators, thereby diminishing corruption.

In his analysis of the representation of viceregal power, Alejandro Cañeque cautions against employing the term *corruption*. Cañeque holds that the sale of offices cannot be considered a corrupt practice. Patron-client relationships impregnated the bureaucracy so much that contemporaries did not consider the exchange of favours as illicit but rather as a customary practice.[8] Clearly, Cañeque is right in criticizing

a tendency in Latin American scholarship to assume implicitly that the pre-modern state functioned like the modern state. He also correctly underlines the power of patronage in the *ancien régime*. Nevertheless, the sale of offices probably was more controversial than Cañeque holds. As mentioned before, the crown could sell offices without jurisdiction, such as the post of *regidor* (councilman) on town councils, without incurring legal problems. The law, however, did not permit the sale of those offices that carried jurisdiction, such as the posts of *alcaldes mayores* and *audiencia* ministers. That is precisely why the crown reverted to the practice of *beneficio de empleo*. The vehement resistance of the Council of the Indies to the monarch's planned sale of offices with jurisdiction illustrates the controversial nature of this practice. When in 1633 the Count-Duke of Olivares offered to sell two posts in the financial administration in Veracruz, the Council weighed in with a long *consulta* (a political or judiciary recommendation to the king) full of angry objections. Beyond that, a number of jurists even considered the sale of notarial positions distasteful.[9]

Many statesmen therefore anticipated detrimental results from the sale of offices and did not view every infraction of the law with indifference. Although client-patron relationships pervaded the early modern state, and contemporaries did not view clientelism, within limits, as immoral, there are clear indications that officials who exceeded these limits faced consequences. For example, in 1704 the councillors of the Indies, although largely favouring the aristocratic party at court, revoked Alburquerque's measures to imprison members of a powerful merchant family. The Council suggested admonishing the viceroy sternly and fining two of his allied *audiencia* ministers.[10] As another example of this ongoing conflict, the seventeenth-century monarchy had ordered a series of inspections of the treasury of Veracruz to examine excessive deviance.[11]

Early twentieth-century constitutional historians have debated the problem of using modern terminology for historical phenomena. Over sixty years ago Otto Brunner asserted that sources from the Middle Ages never used the term *state*. He warned against applying current concepts of the modern state to previous epochs. Doing so would distort the functioning and ethos of officials of the past.[12] For example,

nineteenth-century German historiography consistently applied the term *Reichskanzler* or chancellor of the Reich, to the office of the *cancellarius* in the Holy Roman Empire. Yet medieval sources simply use the phrase *aulae regalis cancellarius* (chief scribe) of the royal (or imperial) court. The *cancellarius* bought his office to supervise the scribes at the court. He did not hold a political office and had little in common with the most powerful appointed politician in the late-nineteenth-century German Reich.[13]

The term *corruption* does not appear in the Spanish sources of the early eighteenth century either. Rather, the authors usually speak of "abuse" or "lack of integrity." In a modern sense, corruption can be defined as the deviation from legal or moral rules out of self-interest. The democratic process in Western states theoretically determines the criteria of office holding. Yet we cannot apply this idea fully to the *ancien régime*. We would impose our conceptions on the past and be inclined to adopt the standard of the European "motherland" as a measure for moral conduct. When the crown defended the restrictions on trade, it hampered the Mexican economy. Labelling contraband merchants corrupt for evading an unsustainable legal and commercial system would be absurd.

Historiography has shown that over the course of the early modern period the European monarchies successfully increased bureaucratic compliance with the law. For a long time in the *ancien régime*, the crown meted out retribution only against those officials who broke the law and did not have powerful enough political connections. Their opponents blamed them of "lack of integrity," yet their censure bore the mark of political vengeance. We can only talk about corruption in the narrower modern sense once the judiciary had reached sufficient independence to prosecute disobedience even of those belonging to the dominant clique. Only when the state had matured into its modern form as a neutral arbiter between contending parties did corruption evolve from a constituent characteristic of the state into an ethical problem for the individual.

Circumscribing this process consistently with terms such as *deviance* or *abuse* would render the text cumbersome. Instead of avoiding the term corruption altogether – or any other concept that has undergone marked change in content or did not exist in historical sources, such as state or gender – one has to be aware of the semantic drift of

the term and define the concept properly. One of the aims of this work is to evaluate precisely the viceregal court of Alburquerque by gauging the scale of non-compliance with royal directives. Therefore, I apply the term *corruption* as an analytical tool to grasp a political process of a past time without invoking a moral judgment.

The Viceregal Court of Colonial Mexico

Among historians of Europe, there is no scarcity of literature on the courts, yet there are few precise definitions of this institution. The Spanish Renaissance preacher Antonio de Guevara characterized the court plainly as "a group of men who meet to deceive one another."[14] Apart from the functional definition – deception – the quote is concerned with personnel. For Elias, the personnel of the court were those individuals incorporated into the royal household:

> *What we describe as the "court" of the ancien régime is, to begin with, nothing other than the vastly expanded house and household of the French kings and their dependents with all people belonging to them.... The king's rule over the country was nothing other than an extension of and addition to the prince's rule over his household. What Louis XIV ... attempted, was to organize his country as his personal property, as the enlargement of the household.*[15]

For Elias, all people whose life revolved around the royal palace such as courtiers, domestics, and others could live either in the royal palace or in their own dwellings in the capital.[16]

Geoffrey Elton echoes Elias's concept when he argues that the sixteenth-century English court "comprised all those who at any given time were within 'his grace's house'; and all those with a right to be there were courtiers."[17] These conceptions explain who belonged to the court, but they do not provide clear delineations of the institution. Ronald Asch argues that the distinction between court and household is insufficient because it draws a blurry line between those who belong

to the king's household proper, the court, and those who have access to the ruler and participate in courtly functions while not being in "his grace's house".[18] This is particularly relevant for the court in New Spain. The viceroy did not command a commensurate private household that incorporated the colonial officials and dignitaries, unlike the French nobles Elias had in mind. Any definition based on belonging to "his grace's house" seems flawed because of the limited number of members of the viceregal household proper.

A spatial view of the court adds further clarity. Peter Burke describes the court in Europe "as a place, usually a palace with gatehouse, courtyards, hall, and chapel ... but including a chamber where the ruler could withdraw and one or more antechambers where suitors waited for audience."[19] Nevertheless, Burke is quick to add that the court formed part of the "social milieu" of the Renaissance and moved to wherever the ruler journeyed.[20] Solely considering the spatial concept of the palace remains difficult. The viceroy frequently travelled outside the palace, both within the city and occasionally to other urban centres such as Veracruz, to supervise royal defence or construction projects.

The question arises whether any courtiers existed outside of the viceregal entourage. In Europe there were counsellors or politicians who did not permanently reside at the court or in the capital and yet wielded significant influence.[21] In New Spain, many members of the higher social echelons, while not living in the palace, participated in and even determined the operation of the court. The viceroy Count of Revillagigedo closely collaborated with the regent of the tribunal of accounts, who allegedly advised him on promotions in the royal exchequer (financial administration).[22] Private persons such as businessmen built relationships with the viceroy or married into retainers' families and thereby established ties to the viceroy. Participation in viceregal politics could be achieved by virtue of office holding or through contact with the viceroy. Royal ministers and clergy held their positions by royal appointment or promotion within the Church. Therefore, they did not depend on the viceroy to the same extent as the aristocrats and bureaucrats in Spain relied on the king. *Audiencia* ministers quarrelled with the viceroy but did not necessarily face the same consequences as a councillor in Madrid falling out of favour with the king.

In New Spain the household of the viceroy consisted of the entourage of *criados* (clients brought from Spain). Whether viceroys had favourites (*validos*) among his *criados* is a question historiography has barely touched upon.[23] In addition to these courtiers, the whole palace bustled with activity. Virtually all royal ministers and officials reported to the palace for work, while mint officials laboured in the building immediately to the northeast of the palace. In contradistinction to the court in Madrid, however, none of these officials served a household function for the viceroy such as nobles did for the king. With the exception of the palace guard and possibly the *alcalde del crimen* the ministers did not reside in the palace. Rather, they worked in close vicinity to the viceroy. This underscores the importance of personal relationships with the viceroy for individuals with commercial interests or social ambitions.

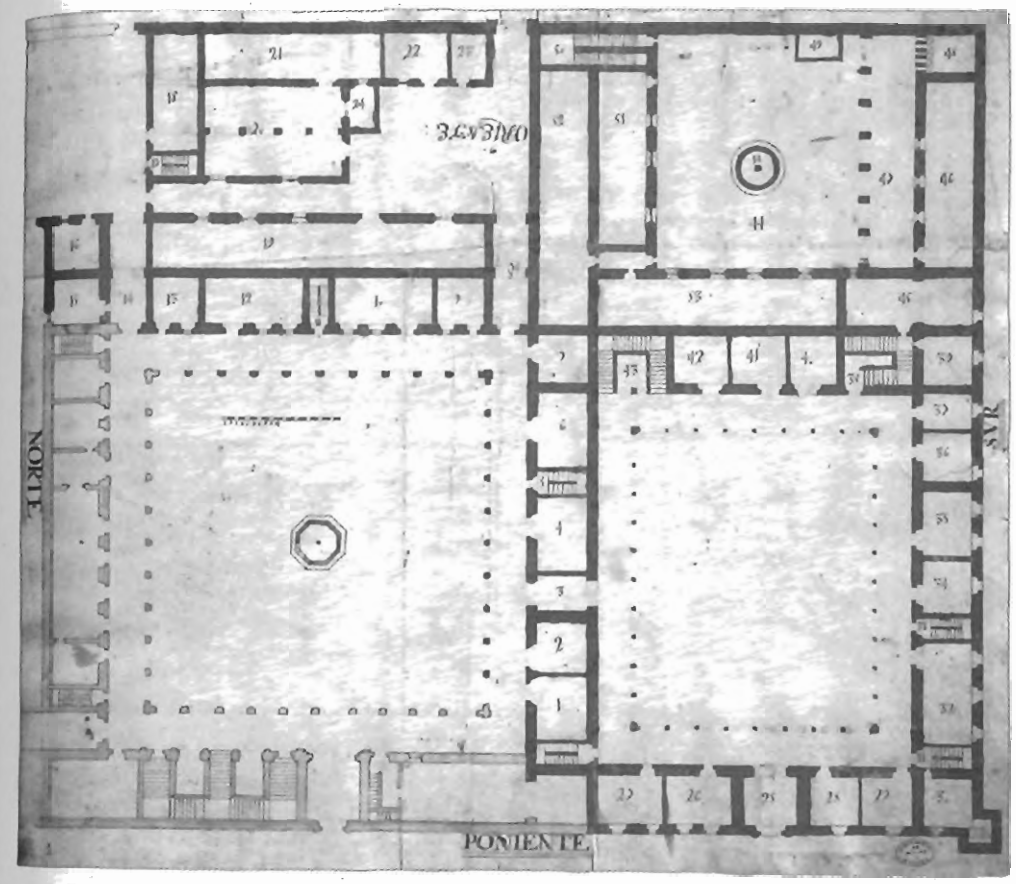
The viceroy conducted business and ceremonies primarily in the palace, called the royal palace (*palacio real*) or palace of the viceroys (*palacio de los virreyes*, nowadays called the national palace or *palacio nacional*). Located in the heart of the city on the main square (*plaza mayor* or *zócalo*) adjacent to the cathedral, the residence of the archbishop, and the town hall, the palace was situated in close proximity to rivalling powers in the colony. The architecture of the palace – with the current uppermost floor added in the national period – symbolized royal power to the colonial crowd. At the same time, the building was exposed to the populace on the *plaza mayor*. In the turmoil of 1692, rioters destroyed most of the viceroy's residence in the palace and threatened his safety. Nonetheless, the official and his family resumed residence in the palace after its blessing in 1697.[24]

The viceregal palace in Mexico City consisted of four patios: the principal patio was built on the northwest with the viceregal chambers facing the main square (*plaza mayor*); the patio of the *audiencia* towards the southwest; the prison patio (*patio de la cárcel*) on the southeast; and the stable patio (*patio de la caballeriza*) with a passageway to the royal treasury on the northeast corner of the palace. On the lower floor of the palace, staircases provided access to the mezzanine and the upper floor and housed the lower *criados*, horses, and carriages. Thirty soldiers of the viceregal guard also inhabited this floor. The mezzanine or second floor stretched over most of the palace except for the northwest section.

The southern wing contained several offices of the royal treasury such as the *alcabala* and the tribute collection (rooms no. 20–24). The prison patio housed the *alcalde del crimen* and a special chamber for prisoners of more notable social standing (25–27, 28).

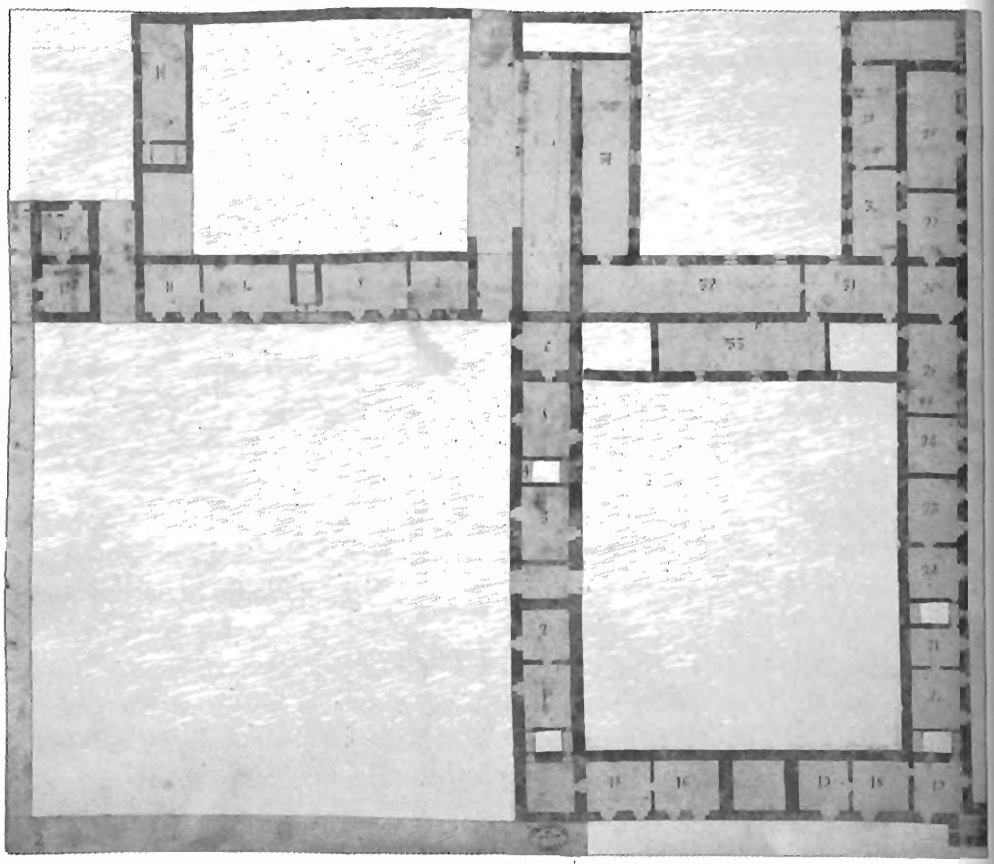
The ministers and subordinate employees of the *audiencia* met in several offices on the third floor around the southwest patio. The ministers split up into the *sala de lo civil* for civil cases and the *sala del crimen* for criminal trials (rooms no. 25 and 33). Their secretaries laboured in rooms no. 6 and 28 as well as in 35 and 36, respectively. The *audiencia* shared this patio with the administration of estates (*juzgado general de bienes de difuntos*) located in room no. 37, the tribunal of accounts (the *tribunal de cuentas*) in no. 30 as well as the accountants of the financial administration (31 and 32). A secret chamber next to the *sala civil* connected with the chapel gallery reserved for the vicereines, located between the principal and the southwest patio.

The viceroy was meant to dominate the upper floor of the principal patio. Here, the viceroy and the *audiencia* judges came together in the hall of the *real acuerdo* to discuss matters of political importance (no. 1). The secretaries of government and war (*oficio de la gobernación y guerra*) assisted in rooms no. 7 and 8. The *consulado* of Mexico, comprised of great merchants, also met regularly on the upper floor (no. 11). The plan of the palace drawn up in 1709 intended for the viceroy, his immediate family, and his *criados mayores* to reside in the section north and west of the consulado hall. The section for the viceroy and his family included the rooms for gentlemen (18 and 19), the viceregal secretary (*secretaría de cámara*), the *salón de puntas* hall, and the antechamber (21, 22, 24). Petitioners waited in these rooms to be admitted to the more secluded sphere of the viceroy in the chambers facing the main square. Here, the salon had twelve balconies for public appearances.[25] This arrangement, smaller than the royal court, possibly resembled a magnate's abode in Madrid, such as Alburquerque's town palace on the Encarnación square. As construction had not finished on large portions of this section, the viceroy probably occupied a group of rooms on the mezzanine along the façade towards the *plaza mayor*.[26] For official occasions, Alburquerque ascended the staircase to the second floor, where he received visitors of higher social standing.[27]



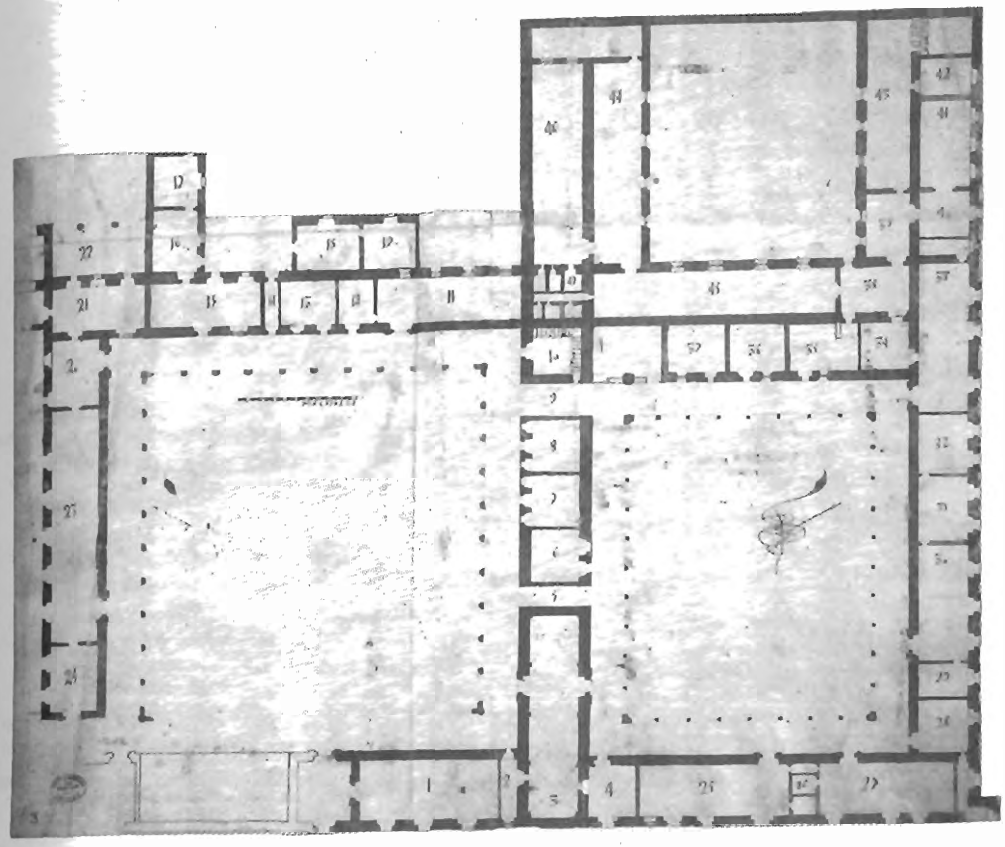
Palace Lower Floor

Figure 3: 1709 Plan for the reconstruction of the first, second, and third floor of the viceregal palace



Palace Mezzanine

Continuation of Figure 3



Palace Upper Floor

Continuation of Figure 3

Planta baja=en el Patio principal que da entrada a la vivienda de los S.res Virreyes resta p.r hacer lo que demuestra dha Planta en el Colorido encarnado y sus no.os se entenderan por lo que mira Ala parte deel norte enla man.a sig.te

1. Cochera para dos Coches
2. Otra Cochera para dos Coches
3. Paradiso de Patio a Patio
4. Otra Cochera
5. Encalera [sic!] para Entresuelos
6. Otra Cochera para dos Coches
7. Aposento de lacayos
8. Paradiso al Patio de Caballerizos
9. Aposento de lacayos
10. Aposento de lacayos
12. Otro Almacen
13. Aposento de lacayos
14. Otro Paradiso q.e ba p.a el lado dela Caja
15. Aposento de Lacayos
16. Otro aposento
17. Escalera para Entresuelo
18. Pajar
19. Caballeriza
20. Caballerizas de dos naves
21. Otra Caballeriza
22. Sala para Guarnel
23. Aposento de mosos
24. Tanque en el Patio de Caballerizas
25. Saguan y entrada al Patio dela R.l audienz.a
26. Sala baja p.a Oficio de Provincia
27. Otro Para Otro Oficio de Provincia
28. Otro Para Otro Oficio
29. Aposento de Lacayos
30. Otro Aposento
31. Escalera de entresuelso
32. Almacen para Bullas
33. Otra escalera de entresuelos
34. Aposento de Mosos
35. Almacen p.a papel sellado
36. Aposento de Mososo
37. Aposento p.a el oficio de ss.no de entradas
38. Saguan de la Carcel
39. Aposento del Carcelero
40. Una Cochera
41. Otra Cochera
42. Otra Cochera
43. Casa de escalera Principal de la audienz.a
44. Patio dela Carcel
45. Un quarto para el Alcayde
46. Galera de Presos
47. Portalon
48. Caja de lugares
49. Tanque de Agua
50. Escalera que sube a las Galeras de Pressos
51. Galera
52. Calaboso
53. Galera Calaboso
54. Pila

Lo hecho en esta Primera Planta es lo que denota el Color azul

Segunda Planta que demuestra la vivienda de los entresuelos en esta Manera

1 y 2 Salas sobre las Cocheras n.s 1 y 2
3. Otra Sala
4. Caja de escalera
5. Otra Sala
6. Su aposento
7. Sala
8. Sala
9. Casa de escalera
10. Sala
11. Aposento
12. Aposento que une con las viviendas que estan ya hech
13. Otro aposento
14. Cebadero sobre el Pajar del n. 18
15 y 16 Salas que toman la entrada para la escalera de el Rincón
17 y 18 y 19 tres salas al otro lado deel saguan para la escalera del otro rincón
20 y 21 dos Piezas para el ofici de Alcabalas que caen por e
22 y 23 dos piezas para Tribut
24. Una pieza para archivo del Trib.l deq.tas q.o baja por su escalera de arriba
25. Sala deel Alcayde de la Carcel
26 y 27 dos piezas para dho Alcayde
28. Sala p.a Caballeros presos sobre el Portalon
29 y 30 dos Piezas para Reos
31. Antesala de la Carcel de Mugeres
32. Sala de Pressas
33. Sala de Deudas
34. Otra Sala separación de sujetos que se entra por la escalera que sube a las Galeras

Tercera Planta que es la que denota las Viviendas Principales y Salas de los Tribunales

1. Sala Para el Real Aquerdo q.e cae sobre el Patio Principal donde esta la armeria y asu lado una Pieza secreta con su escalera que da subida a la Tribuna de la Capilla R.l p.a las S.ras Virreynas q.e es la n. 2
3. Capilla R.l con puertas a ambos Corredores
4. La sachristía
5. Paradiso de Corredor a Corredor
6. Oficio de Camara dela audienz.a
7 y 8 Oficios de Govierno con puertas al corredor deel Patio Principal
9. Paradisso
10. Aposento y asulado escalera para subir ala azotea
11. Sala deel Consulado
12. Su escribania
13. La Chanzillería
14. Paradisso que da entrada a una sotehuela para las viviendas que hade tener y faltan por hacer al encuentro dela obra nueba
15. Una sala
16. Recamara
17. Aposentto
18 y 19 dos quartos p.a Gentilhombres
20. Antesala que da Passo a la
21. que puede ser ss.ria de camara
22. Corredor o Mirador sobre la obra hecha de la R.l Caja y sus oficios corresponde y falta por haserla antesala del n 20 y en lo restante un salon de puntas que es el n 23
24. Antesala para ellado de las viviendas hechas que miran a la plaza mayor
25. Sala para la R.l audienzia
26. Sus secrettos
27. Sala de menor quantia
28. El otro ofiz.o de camara dela audienz.a
29. Aposento del Contt.or dela Messa de Memoria
30. Sala deel Trib.l de quentas
31. Sala de Cott.res ordenadores
32. Sala de Contt.es de Resultas y escotillon citado
33. Sala de el Crimen
34. Casa de escalera y sobre ella el antesala p.a q.u salgan los reos a la visita
35 y 36 los oficios de Camara deel Crimen
37. Jusgado grâl. de Vienes de difuntos
38. Sala de Armas
39. Sala de tormentos
40. Sala donde estenlos S.res Alc.des
41. Capilla de la Carcel
42. Aposento
43. Sala de Reos separados
44. Galera Alta
45. Otra Galera
46. Galera enfermeria
47. Bartolinas

Asimismo se han de hacer en el Patio Principal dos tramos de Corredores alto y bajo y en el lado q. esta hecho dela R.l Caxa el alto q.u le falta y el Patio dela audiencia sus quatro corredores Altos y bajos Como demuestra la Planta

Source: Mapa y explicación de la Planta de lo que falta por hazer en el Real Palacio que es en esta manera," in a *cuaderno* titled "Superior Govierno. Año de 1709. Testimonio de autos hechos en virtud de Real Zedula en que aprueba S.M. a su Excelencia los reparos que se hizieron en el Real Palazio de esta Corte," AGI, Mapas y Planos, México 105 a, b, c.

Some corporations, such as the town hall, the archbishopric, the religious orders, or the craftsmen guilds (*gremios*), never formed part of the palace.[28] Yet, the prelate or the councilmen could become part of the court upon gaining access to the viceroy, his household, or the royal officials working in the palace. Although located within the palace, the prison did not belong to the court. Neither did the archiepiscopate across the street or the town hall, yet undeniably they both exercised influence on it. The archbishop resided in a magnificent palace and controlled a good deal of patronage in the Church. Because of his position he probably held court in his own right. Nonetheless, the court of the king's alter ego remained the most important in the colony.

The protection provided by a personal guard of twenty-five halberdiers endowed the viceroys of Peru and New Spain, as the only crown officials in America, with the aura of royalty. The palace guard's tasks of protecting the entrance and halls of the palace resembled those of the three guard units at the court in Madrid. The viceroy also commanded an infantry company (*compañía*), which guarded the palace and the treasury and policed the city. A privately funded company of cavalry and nine infantry companies (the *tercio de comerciantes*), paid for by the *consulado* and headed by the chief official (prior) of the institution, supported the regular infantry. These units replaced the infantry in the palace when the soldiers were deployed outside of the city. The bakers and bacon traders (*tocineros*) also maintained two companies, and other guilds supported another battalion. In addition, the companies, of *pardos o mulatos*, the units composed of those officially of mixed African and European descent, patrolled the city and paraded at times.[29] They accompanied the viceroy in parades on the *plaza mayor*, underlining royal might, the elevated rank of the viceroy as well as the role of the officers and their soldiers in society. During these occasions, four black slaves brandishing arms marched in front of the viceroy and his personal guard. The other units of the realm followed them. Nonetheless, the loyalty of some of the companies to the viceroy may have been dubious at times. In the early years of the eighteenth century, the *Maestre de campo* (equivalent to a brigadier) Luis Sánchez de Tagle, and his nephew, the prior of the *consulado*, Pedro Sánchez de Tagle, were both

sworn enemies of Alburquerque. They commanded the guild and the *consulado* companies.[30]

Besides the limitations that the Mexican society imposed on the viceroy, the monarch intended to restrict the social ties the officials established with colonial society. The laws of the Indies tightly circumscribed the social life of the court. Viceroys and *audiencia* ministers could not visit members of the colonial society, attend burials, weddings, or baptisms, or act as best men or godfathers of inhabitants of New Spain. The viceroy and the magistrates could only attend such functions for themselves, their families, and their *criados*. The law prohibited the viceroys and their wives from participating individually in festivities and barred the vicereines from entering nunneries. Unmarried viceroys could not join in wedlock without a royal licence and certainly not with persons native to the district.[31] As a result the viceroy could eat only in the company of his wife and *criados*, eschewing the presence of the local society. The king also prohibited the viceroy's children from accompanying him to America.[32] The law forbade the viceroys and their wives to own any real estate such as haciendas, houses, or gardens. They were not allowed to run any business, conduct trade and mining, or participate in explorations or conquests of unconquered territory (*entradas*). A viceroy could not accept credits or gifts; Indians could not labour for him nor could more than four slaves serve him.[33] In theory, these laws cut off the viceroy from most of the social life of the colony and reduced him to a detached and loyal servant of the crown – a form of "philosopher-king," as Phelan remarked about the *audiencia* ministers.[34] If these regulations had been obeyed, the palace would have become a sombre place to live in, perhaps mirroring Francisco de Quevedo's observation that "palaces are the sepulchres of a living death."[35]

In practice, the viceroys and local society flouted these rules. The officials relied on contacts with local social networks, and socializing formed part of politics. Because of the clandestine character of viceregal social interactions, however, the sources are opaque about the day-to-day life at court.

The celebration of important religious festivals served the purpose of cementing social relationships. Elites flocked to the main square to celebrate the king's or the queen's birthday, the birthday of the viceroy

or his spouse, and great religious holidays such as Christmas or Easter. On 4 February 1708 Alburquerque ordered nine days of observance and jubilation (a *novena*) for the birth of King Philip's heir Luis Felipe, beginning with the procession of the statue of Our Lady of Succour to the cathedral. At night, actors performed comedies in the palace. The inhabitants of the city kept the lights outside of their dwellings lit well into the night, and fireworks exploded over the *plaza mayor.* Bullfights entertained the populace on San Diego square until they ended on Ash Wednesday. After Easter, the festivities resumed with a parade of floats clad with images of the cities of New Spain.[36]

On 5 October the *regidores* and *alcaldes ordinarios* swore homage to the young prince. They attended mass in the cathedral dressed in gala attire and then entered the palace to congratulate the viceroy and the vicereine. In the afternoon the councilmen gathered again with other *beneméritos* in the town hall and proceeded in orderly fashion towards the palace to salute the viceregal couple. Afterwards, the dignitaries ambled through the principal streets until the notary publicly read the homage to the prince. More celebrations followed the event.[37]

During the mid-eighteenth century, for example, the ministers of the *audiencia* and the tribunals (such as the tribunal of accounts) as well as the higher clergy, including the archbishop and canons, assembled in the palace to congratulate the viceroy on his birthday. Town councilmen and *consulado* merchants joined them. Following a grand assembly in the Alameda square, the musicians gathered in the palace and performed for the occasion. The viceroy and vicereine opened the dance and then were joined by the invited dignitaries. The celebration continued until midnight. The next day the invitees attended mass in the form of a Te Deum in the cathedral. The palace infantry paraded on the *plaza mayor,* where artillery and infantry fired three salvos to salute the viceroy.[38]

On other occasions the members of the elite proceeded after mass to the palace for the *besamanos* – to kiss the hands of the viceregal couple.[39] The palace hosted musical performances and comedies attended by the secular and religious dignitaries.[40] Because of the importance of these public spectacles, the palace probably followed a finely tuned choreography according to which the invitees entered the viceregal chamber and participated in pageants. These public spectacles

Source: Museo Naval, Madrid.

Figure 4: Fernando Brambila, Plaza mayor of Mexico City (to the left the viceregal palace)

show that the royal officials ignored the strict stipulations of the law. The celebrations served to demonstrate the legitimacy and power of the colonial order to the public.[41] Bitter quarrels erupted occasionally concerning an individuals' position in a pageant or access to the viceroy. These conflicts reflect a society obsessed with social hierarchy. Similarly, the French Duke of Saint-Simon agonized about preference of birth and prestige bestowed upon members of the court of Versailles.[42] Akin to the conduct of the French nobles described by Norbert Elias, the conflicts about social hierarchy in New Spain revolved also around the possibility of social advancements and patronage. By participating in viceregal

festivities, Mexicans demonstrated their acceptance of colonial order and their own place within.[43] This explains why population segments such as Indians and Afro-Mexicans voluntarily participated in the pageants. Finally, as the lavish pageants also entertained the populace, they fulfilled a part of the patron's obligation towards his clients in exchange for their support. As *panis et circenses* (bread and circuses) had kept the Roman populace happy, the Mexican spectacles also diverted attention from the more distressing aspects of colonial life.

During the eighteenth century, enlightened attempts by the crown to enforce the legal conduct of its officials help explain the importance of social gatherings in the palace. In the *juicio de residencia* of Viceroy Count of Fuenclara, in office from 1742 to 1746, friendly witnesses admitted that the count had permitted illegal gambling in the palace, following the long-established customs of his predecessors. The witnesses stressed that Fuenclara had allowed games only with "great reluctance" or "with great moderation."[44] According to them, the nocturnal reunions in the antechamber always ended at ten, when the viceroy retired to his chamber.[45] Not surprisingly, most viceroys socialized with friends and *criados* on a regular basis. These social gatherings served not only to entertain the viceroy but, like the pageants, helped to strengthen the social fabric.

Although Alburquerque resided in the palace on the *plaza mayor* most of the time, he also moved around the city and outside for relaxation or official inspections. The duke travelled to Veracruz twice to examine the state of the port fortifications and to supervise his commercial schemes with foreign merchants. Alburquerque and other viceroys retired frequently to San Angel and to San Augustín de las Cuevas (now Tlalpan), both wealthy towns south of the city. The crown did not own any property on the outskirts of the city, and the viceroy could not legally possess any in his own right. The viceroys relaxed in the gardens of their allies' haciendas, supposedly to seek cures for their failing health. For example, the treasurer of the tribunal of accounts, Francisco de Medina Picazo lavishly hosted Alburquerque on his property in San Augustín. Medina Picazo also sponsored a luxurious boat ride to Ixtacalco for the viceroy and the vicereine.[46] A mid-century successor of Alburquerque, the first Count of Revillagigedo, and his family frequently stayed on the

property of their friend Jacinto Martínez de Aguirre in San Angel.[47] Many ministers, officials, and merchants also socialized in their leisure in the outskirts.

Another important opportunity to forge a link with society was the arrival of a new viceroy in New Spain. This spectacle exposed the incoming official to populace and dignitaries along the road from Veracruz to Mexico City. The choreography varied in detail. After disembarkation the viceroy customarily rested for a few days in Veracruz, where he symbolically received the keys to the city. Then the entourage ascended to Jalapa, escorted by a cavalry company. The councilmen of the towns en route came out to salute the new representative of the king. In Jalapa, two canons of the cathedral chapter and a town hall notary, all from Puebla, joined the procession. The train then wound its way through the adorned street towards Tlaxcala, where a multitude of Indians cheered the new viceroy. Traversing the city, the Indian nobles marched ahead of the dignitary followed by musicians.[48] The prelates of the religious orders and representatives of the cathedral chapter who had descended from Mexico City extended their welcome to the viceroy. For Alburquerque's convenience, Archbishop Ortega y Montañés sent two gilded carriages and seven mule teams, two of them loaded with silver cases and another two with confectionary.[49] After a brief sojourn in the predominantly indigenous town, the viceroy elect continued his way towards Puebla, where the corporations of Mexico City greeted him. In Puebla, Alburquerque spent eight days presiding over bullfights and splendid public ceremonies. The voyage then took him to Otumba to meet his predecessor. Before entering Mexico City, the viceroys visited the shrine of Guadalupe and then spent a few more days in the small residence at Chapultepec, a crown property that was a precursor of Emperor Maximilian's palace.[50] In proper sequence, the ministers of the tribunals, the cathedral chapter, the inquisition, and other clerics passed by to salute the viceregal couple. A multitude convened around the castle to marvel at the richly decorated dwelling containing two silver-plated desks valued at 15,000 pesos. Bullfights in one of the courtyards and a host of public vendors added to the festive mood at Chapultepec. The viceroy entered Mexico City when the town hall had completed its preparations. After praying in the cathedral he approached the viceregal

palace under a velvet canopy. On Monday, 27 November 1702, with the reading of the *reales cédulas* (a royal communication requiring some action) in the *sala civil*, Alburquerque formally took possession of the offices of governor, captain general, and president of the *audiencia*.[51] The duke's entry culminated in a parade through the lavishly decorated capital on 8 December, accompanied by representatives of the *audiencia*, the university, and the city as well as by the vicereine and her ladies-in-waiting. The festivities terminated with bullfights and fireworks. During his entry, Alburquerque passed through triumphal arches of the city and the ecclesiastical corporations. Here, he swore to uphold the privileges (*fueros*) of the city and to protect the Church.[52] In allegories to classical legends, these arches usually depicted the viceroys as heroes and the Spanish king as a god.[53] By choosing Achilles as the motif for its arch, the city flatteringly underlined Alburquerque's exalted standing as a grandee.[54] At the same time the *cabildo* (municipal council) alluded to the fate of the classical hero, thus reminding the duke and the populace of the dangers of hubris. The city emphasized the contractual nature of government in New Spain. Under these terms the viceroy observed the rights of the corporation that considered itself the *caput*, the head and foremost representative of the entire realm.

At the end of a viceroy's term, upon receiving notice that his successor was en route from Veracruz towards the capital, the viceroy called upon the archbishop in his palace to bid him farewell. The prelate, joined by the *audiencia* ministers, reciprocated with a visit to the viceregal palace. All paid their respects to the viceregal couple and expressed regret about their departure. The vicereine also made a farewell tour of the convents in the capital that she had visited frequently with her daughters – if she had any in Mexico – *criadas*, and ladies of colonial society.[55] In fact, even before Alburquerque's term, Archbishop Ortega y Montañés complained that viceroys and vicereines visited the nunneries so often as to disturb the convents' peace. The prelate asked the crown to prohibit further visits to the nunneries – apparently to no avail.[56]

In due time, the viceroy left the capital to the sound of the mighty cathedral bells. Riding in carriage, followed by the black guard and dignitaries with their wives, the entourage set out to the shrine of the virgin of Guadalupe. The departure of the first Count of Revillagigedo in 1755

demonstrates the size of the secular procession. Two hundred mules loaded with property allegedly accompanied the outgoing viceroy.[57] At the shrine, members of Mexican society paid their respects and returned to the capital.[58] The viceregal train then proceeded to the compound of royal houses in Otumba on the northeastern fringe of the valley of Mexico, where the viceroy expected to meet his successor.[59] Here, he handed over the baton symbolizing governance over New Spain.

During their voyage the viceroys and their entourage stayed in crown buildings in Otumba as well as in Chapultepec. Lucas Alamán also mentions royal property in Tlaxcala. Nevertheless, viceroys sometimes eschewed staying in these residences, preferring to sojourn with local persons of importance. The first Count of Revillagigedo awaited his successor at his friend's hacienda San Bartolomé de los Tepetates "*alias de los vireyes*," adjacent to Otumba.[60] This hacienda probably received its denomination "of the viceroys" because other viceroys had frequented it on their journeys to and from Veracruz.[61]

The viceregal court expanded temporarily when Alburquerque travelled outside of the palace. Meanwhile, several viceregal clients and most functionaries continued their labours in the palace. Their activities belonged to the court, because ultimately most decisions of clients depended on the viceroy. The situation became more complex when both the outgoing and incoming viceroy resided in the colony. Hopefuls vied to set up alliances with the incoming viceroy while the outgoing one still wielded influence. Since Alburquerque returned to Spain over two years after the end of his tenure, he must have set up residence somewhere in the capital. His patronage system survived well into the period after tenure, even departure and death. For example, the Osorio merchant family was loyal to Alburquerque in the showdown against the Sánchez de Tagle network. In 1738, five years after Alburquerque's death, Julián de Osorio's heirs appealed to Alburquerque's son to support their aspirations for promotion.[62]

European historiography has considered the question whether institutions of government like the judiciary or the Parliament belonged to the royal courts or formed a separate sphere. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a marked change occurred in the royal residencies. Various departments of state, such as the administration

of justice and finance, began to "move out of court."[63] After this move, most officials did not have regular access to the sovereign, although in the seventeenth century some nobles still held positions in institutions as well as in court offices. These nobles bridged a gap between household and government.[64] The move signalled the separation of professional bureaucracy and the king's court, further carving out the distinction between the state and the person of the monarch.

In the early modern period, we also observe the comparable move of the royal European court "out of the capital." In the sixteenth century Philip II of Spain moved the court to Madrid to rule away from the traditional aristocratic strongholds.[65] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the construction of princely residences, such as the Escorial and the palaces at Bonn or Versailles, followed a similar logic.

In New Spain, a similar tendency can be observed. In the eighteenth century sections of the government started "leaving" the court. In the appointment of Juan José de Veytia Linage as accountant of mercury residing in Puebla, we can see a precursor of this separation, since the crown intentionally moved the office outside the viceregal palace into a different city. The tribunal of the miners, a corporation founded in 1776 and charged with settling litigation and fostering business, never formed part of the palace.[66] Viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez (1785–1786) periodically relocated the viceregal residence to buildings in Chapultepec Park well outside the city proper.[67] This residence removed the viceroy from a potentially angry crowd on the *plaza mayor* as well as putting some distance between his court and rivalling civil and ecclesiastical powers. At the same time, the dissolution of the traditional unity between administration and the viceregal residence signalled a reduction of the court's function as a space where political negotiations occurred. The separation hampered personal contacts among power elites and bureaucracy. It heralded the rationalization and professionalization of the bureaucracy, which grew increasingly loyal to the crown's demands. It is possible that the viceregal buildings in Chapultepec served primarily as a source for entertainment rather than having a significant political function. Once again this development parallels contemporary European courts.[68] How Bernardo de Gálvez and his successors intended

the new residence to function needs to be further researched, as do the implications of this process for the independence of Mexico.

The court in New Spain was the place where the viceroy, his retainers, power elites, and royal officials negotiated politics and their standing in society. Norbert Elias's model, although inspiring, suggests many problems for the Mexican case, because the court did not consist principally of the king's household. Instead, officials, clergymen, and the commercial elite held positions in their own right and did not depend on the viceroy to the same degree as courtiers depended on the king in Versailles. Theoretically, the laws barred the viceroy and the vicereine from socializing with local society. In reality, however, the viceroy and his family participated in colourful pageants and even gambling, developing close-knit ties with society. Nevertheless, in this period we already see precursors of late eighteenth-century Bourbon policies separating the society from the administration to curb overly unlawful behaviour. Corruption engulfed viceroys just as any other royal official of the *ancien régime*. Using the term *corruption* with its modern connotation is problematic because it implies an individual moral failure. I employ the concept here, however, to describe a form of administrative conduct which in the early modern period was endemic and often considered acceptable. The aim is here to understand what constituted excessive infraction of the law at a time when the European states were rolling back corruption in their home countries and their colonies.