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The Absent Monarch and Urban Revolt in Early Modern Mexico and the Holy Roman Empire

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Il sovrano assente e le rivolte urbane in Messico e nel Sacro Romano Impero nel XVII secolo
Yves-Marie Bercé ha identificato il monarca assente come una manifestazione del vuoto di sovranità in grado di fomentare disordini politici, rivolte, ribellioni e guerre civili. Nel saggio sostengo invece che il vuoto sovrano, in quanto caratteristica integrante dei governi imperiali della prima età moderna, fosse intrinsecamente ambiguo e potesse funzionare sia come forza centripeta che centrifuga. In una situazione di crisi politica e di rottura, l'"assenteismo" monarchico poteva essere un fattore stabilizzante e lavorare a favore dell'autorità e della continuità della monarchia e della dinastia.

PAROLE CHIAVE: SOVRANITÀ; RIVOLTA URBANA; STORIA MODERNA; SPAGNA ASBURGICA; SACRO ROMANO IMPERO.

Yves-Marie Bercé identified the absent monarch as a manifestation of sovereign void likely to foment political unrest, revolt, rebellion and civil war. I am positing that sovereign void as an integral feature of early modern imperial governments was inherently ambiguous and could function as a centripetal as well as centrifugal force. In a situation of political crisis and disruption, monarchical 'absenteeism' could be a stabilising factor and work in favour of the authority and continuity of monarchy and dynasty.

KEYWORDS: SOVEREIGNY; URBAN REVOLT; EARLY MODERN HISTORY; HABSBURG SPAIN; HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE.

Early modern conceptualisations of sovereignty – monarchical and republican – continue to attract scholarly attention and stimulate debate[1]. In recent years, the established Euro-centric narrative of monarchical sovereignty as the conceptual engine of a process of early modern state-

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building that culminated in the modern nation state has been absorbed into a wider, trans-disciplinary debate differentiating our understanding of governance, empire, individual human rights and international law in comparative and global contexts (Benton 2010; Glanville 2014; Herzog 2015). While the ways in which individuals and communities negotiated, limited and resisted sovereign authorities remain at the centre of historiographical debate, a focus on the relationship between sovereign and semi-sovereign entities in Europe and elsewhere produces invigorating insights. In short, relevant scholarship has dismantled and transcended entrenched notions of early modern sovereignty generally and "absolute" monarchical power in particular.

As a result, early modern monarchs have emerged as less powerful than previously suggested (Bercé 1992; Henshall 1992). A new consensus approaches early modern monarchical rule as a continual struggle to reconcile centripetal and centrifugal forces within intermeshing local, regional, proto-national and global contexts (Cuttica and Burgess 2011). This consensus acknowledges the autonomy and agency of a multitude of political bodies and groups within a wide and flexible framework of early modern understandings of sovereignty (Cardim et al. 2012; Garfia 2023).

Within this emerging consensus, however, the issue of monarchical absenteeism as part of the early modern experience of power, authority and sovereignty still receives comparatively little attention. The emphasis so far has been on systemic crises of monarchical sovereignty such as *interregna* and royal minorities or dramatic disruptions like revolutions and rebellions (Beem 2008; Benigno 2000; Lachaud and Penman 2017). The discussion of monarchical absenteeism has yet to step out of the shadow of a historiographical tradition that saw early modern government as intrinsically flawed and underdeveloped, characterized by a lack of agency and control that identifies it as "pre-modern", with pre-modernity understood as a chiffre for relative primitivity in terms of theory and practice of governance.

This article aims to correct and differentiate this perspective. It explores the agency of the absent monarch within the dynamic context of urban rebellion as a disruptive event potentially threatening the status quo. It starts from the fact that a relative lack of centripetal power – what Yves-Marie Bercé has aptly called "sovereign void" or "void of sovereign power"

(Bercé 2014, 81-91) – was inherent to early modern government. The personal nature of kingship and the complexity of secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions intersecting across multi-layered societies invariably limited the reach of monarchical power and authority. The absent monarch was perhaps the most blatant manifestation of this void of sovereignty and a potentially crucial factor in terms of determining whether political unrest would escalate to the point of urban revolt, rebellion, or civil war.

Bercé understands sovereign void specifically as a temporary and accidental phenomenon, such as a royal minority or the period of transfer of power from a deceased hereditary ruler to their successor. Such a period of sovereign void, he suggests, offered subjects the opportunity to revisit and renegotiate the pact with their ruler. His chosen example is the death of Louis XIII of France in May 1643, when the provincial estates of Rouergue in the Avergne, with support from the parlements of Toulouse and Bordeaux, sought to enforce a reduction of tolls and fees imposed without their consent as well as the restitution of local control of taxation suppressed only a few decades earlier (Bercé 1974). The demands from local notables, nobles and peasants interlaced social and fiscal grievances with constitutional memory and the popular expectation that the demise of the old king invited and necessitated the examination and revision of his more controversial decisions. The intendant of Guyenne and the court in Paris disagreed, however, and the revolt was eventually crushed by the troops of Cardinal Mazarin.

From Bercé's vantage point, a royal *interregnum* constituted a temporary yet structural and potentially highly disruptive feature of early modern monarchical government that highlights its vulnerable and precarious quality. It was distinctive in that it was the death of the monarch as a physical person that could expand sovereign void to the point of constitutional and political crisis. The Fronde in France (1648-53), the War of the Three Henrys (1585-89) towards the end of the French Wars of Religion (1562-98) and the Time of Troubles in Russia (1598–1613) epitomize the temporary absence of sovereign power as a seedling bed for political turmoil and reconfiguration of the status quo. The Dutch revolt (1566-1648), the English Civil Wars (1642-51) and the French Wars of Religion as a whole illustrate the fact that religious division could inflate sovereign void to the point of existential crisis for the pre–modern state.

Sovereign void, then, undoubtedly tested the limits of early modern governance and came with specific vulnerabilities likely to be exploited in a situation of crisis such as urban unrest. This article, however, posits that those same vulnerabilities could enable the absent monarch to absorb the challenge and have a "good crisis". The monarch could turn a challenge to royal authority into an opportunity to reform governance and reassert authority. Starting from Bercé's proposition, I want to make two points.

The first point is that the absent monarch could be a permanent rather than temporary feature of early modern governance and political experience. The *monarquía Hispánica* with territories scattered across four continents is one obvious and particular well-researched example (Andrade and Reger 2012; Cardim et al. 2012; Ruíz Ibañez 2022). The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, stretching across Western, Central and East Central Europe and onto the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic, is another, equally pertinent example (Whaley 2012; Wilson 2018). Both empires were composite or poly-centric body politics that gathered a great number of diverse dominions and territories under the same ruler. Each of their constituent parts tended to have its own historically rooted and distinctive relationship to their prince, who was the ruler of all as well as the ruler of each. Both monarchies had a diverse and sophisticated repertoire of institutional, legal, administrative and symbolic means to convey, communicate and negotiate power and authority across distance and at different levels of political participation.

The two empires also differed in crucial aspects. The Spanish monarchy was a global maritime empire ruled by the Spanish Habsburg dynasty. The Spanish Habsburgs were hereditary monarchs in each of their dominions and ruled over populations that were ethnically, linguistically and culturally extremely diverse, though unifyingly identified as either Catholics or non-Christians subject to mission and conversion. While Holy Roman emperors did not have to straddle oceans and continents in order to exert their authority, they still faced significant challenges in the form of the dispersion of their territories as well as linguistic, cultural, constitutional and confessional diversity. They presided over an elective monarchy made up of a body of largely autonomous princes, with the emperor as first among equals and immediate sovereign of the

Imperial Free Cities (*Freie Reichsstädte*). Since Frederick III (reigned 1452-93), emperors had been members of the Austrian branch of the Catholic House of Habsburg.

In both imperial structures the authority of the absent monarch was routinely delegated, negotiated and communicated through a political process involving layers of more or less self-governing entities at the level of territory and locality. The institution of the viceroy is the obvious points of reference for the Spanish monarchy. In the Holy Roman Empire, the imperial diet (*Reichstag*), the *Reichskammergericht* (Imperial Chamber Court) and the *Reichshofrat* (Aulic Council) represented authority and mediated conflict within and between constituent polities. In short, in both monarchies the absence of the monarch was a calculated and integral part of the political fabric.

The second point I want to make is closely related to the first. I would like to draw attention to the fact that political crisis could present the absent ruler with the opportunity to reassess the ways in which monarchical power was exercised in far-flung places. Commonly, different versions of the explicit and implicit pacts between monarch and subjects existed. These were subject to shifting interpretations on the part of all the parties involved. The court and the institutions and the individuals wielding delegated authority each had their take on what this responsibility involved and how it had to be met. Institutions, groups and individuals at the territorial or local level did not necessarily agree with decisions taken by those representing the imperial centre.

In fact, the right to represent the monarch could itself become the bone of contention among those claiming a share in the exercise of monarchical authority. If this was the case, the competing claimants were likely to turn to the absent monarch for mediation and adjudication. In doing so, they confirmed the ruler's inherent position as the ultimate political arbiter. While the status quo was challenged, the authority of the absent monarch itself was not necessarily at stake, at least not in the first instance. In this specific situation, sovereign void could offer the monarchical centre the opportunity to reassess and reorganize the delegation of power and in fact reinforce its authority.

Despite profound differences in terms of historical genesis and geopolitical locale as well as political, economic, and religious make-up, then, both the Spanish monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire were built on

a mutual compact between crown and territorial or local elites. In both monarchies, the exercise of royal authority depended on the ability and willingness of political entities with different degrees of autonomy and reach to align themselves with the imperial centre. Accordingly, one of the primary responsibilities of local representatives of royal authority was to convey a sense of the presence of the absent monarch to the population at large and thus to ensure that monarch (as person and office) and dynastic monarchy (as a form of government) remained central to the political and spiritual imagination (Cañeque 2004; Stolleis 2017, 53–72).

In both monarchies, again, the relative absence of sovereign power was so deeply embedded in the popular perception and experience of monarchical rule that it could stabilize as well as obstruct the exercise of monarchical authority. In both cases, the absent monarch exercised power through representatives, institutions and rituals as well as political discourse and legal process. Monarchical authority was divinely sanctioned as well as framed by law, custom and political context. The popular perception of the distant monarch was that of judge and protector, mediator and peacemaker – the authority to be called upon at a point of crisis or conflict (Ruíz Ibañez 2022, part IV; Mazín 2007). Depending on circumstances, the absent monarch could operate this role and manage expectations even when his *simulacra* – the representatives and symbolic representations and of monarchical power – were challenged or assaulted.

If unrest grew around specific policies, processes or individuals representing monarchical authority and if the actual focus was on the way in which monarchical authority was exercised by representatives rather than the legitimacy of monarchy and dynasty as such, monarchical absenteeism could offer the room to manoeuvre that was needed to re-negotiate, maintain and re-affirm authority. The distant monarch was able to loom above local conflict and factions, convey impartiality and claim the role of arbiter. My hypothesis, in short, is that sovereign void was as a source of constitutional-political resilience. It provided its own checks-and-balances and helped maintain the bond between people and "el rey justo y sacro".

In the following, I will develop these points by means of examining two case studies of urban uprisings in the first half of the seventeenth

century: the *tumulto de México* (Mexico City, January 1624) in the Spanish monarchy, and the *Fettmilchaufstand* (Frankfurt am Main, 1612-1616) in the Holy Roman Empire. Both outbreaks of riotous political violence were caused by a protracted and very public failure of collaboration and communication between main stakeholders of delegated monarchical authority. In both cases, specific groups and individuals felt deprived of their fair share in exercising monarchical authority. This breakdown of trust disturbed the political equilibrium and expanded sovereign void.

In Mexico City, the viceroy, the judges (*oidores*) of the *audiencia real* (the appellate court of New Spain), and the archbishop of Mexico were at odds over their respective share in royal authority. They publicly argued and sought to undermine one another over a prolonged period of time. This had a disastrous effect primarily on the authority of the viceroy, despite the fact that he represented "the king's living image". The decision of the viceroy to arrest the archbishop and send him back to Spain provoked a violent response from a wide cross-section of the Mexican urban population. As Gibran Bautista y Lugo has shown, the crowd attacking the vice-regal palace was made up of several distinct groups with separate though partially interlocking agendas (Bautista y Lugo 2021, esp. 261–303). Yet this diverse multitude was as unified in its protestations of loyalty to the king and appeals to his justice as it was in its hostility of the person of the viceroy.

In Frankfurt am Main, the socio-political groups originally constituting the *Rat* (City Council) – the quasi-aristocratic patricians and the artisan guilds – were unable or unwilling to negotiate their way out of an increasingly precarious political imbalance. The guilds found themselves largely excluded from municipal governance as a result of constitutional changes imposed by emperor Charles V in the wake of the Reformation while at the same time operating in increasingly difficult economic circumstances. Other parts of the community, including the majority of local merchants, shared many of their grievances. The *interregnum* – the death of emperor Rudolf II and forthcoming election of emperor Matthias – set in motion an escalating chain of events.

In both cases, constitutional–political conflict created a flashpoint that mobilized parts of the community that were not normally privy to political participation and decision-making, such as sections of the lower

urban classes or indigenous groups. Assuming agency, these groups participated in the re-negotiation of monarchical authority at the local level and did so mainly through acts of violence. In Mexico, the person and palace of the viceroy became targets, in Frankfurt, some patrician families and especially the Jewish community suffered badly as events unfolded. While representatives of monarchical authority (the viceroy; the patrician councillors) or vulnerable minorities (the Frankfurt Jewish community) were subjected to mob violence in both places, the perpetrators did not intend to challenge royal authority *per se*.

Even though the uprisings appeared to be the result of conflict between representatives of monarchical authority and local groups rather than directed at the monarch as such, they unsettled the metropolitan centres. The courts in Madrid and Vienna were aware of how difficult it was to exercise authority at a great distance and often found it difficult – especially in the case of the transoceanic Spanish monarchy – to get a clear picture of why a situation had escalated and what the role and motivation of the main actors had been. One possible response was to de-escalate a tense situation rather than outrightly confront and punish those possibly in the wrong, for instance by shifting personnel (as happened in the aftermath of the *tumulto*). Negotiated compromise and leniency were acknowledged as one way of maintaining loyalty and restoring governance in distant provinces (and were offered during the early stages of the Fettmilch Uprising). When protest turned into sustained violence and protracted defiance of representatives of monarchical authority threatened to tear at the fabric of monarchical order, brutal retribution usually followed (as was the case at the last stage of the *Fettmilch Uprising*). In both cases, the absent monarch asserted his role as supreme and uncontested political arbiter.

The *tumulto de México*, New Spain, January 1624

On Sunday, 14 January 1624, the archbishop of Mexico, Juan Pérez de la Serna (1573-1631; archb. 1613-1627), was on his way to the port of Veracruz. He had been expelled from his diocese the previous Thursday. The order had been issued by the viceroy of Mexico, Don

Diego Carillo de Mendoza y Pimentel, first Marquis of Gelves (1539-1636; viceroy 1621-24). The archbishop travelled under the close supervision of royal officials, but managed to give them the slip by means of a quill: he proclaimed a *cessatio a divinis*, forbidding any kind of religious service in the capital, and excommunicated the viceroy as a tyrant violating ecclesiastical authority. Once his letter reached Mexico City in the early hours of Monday, 15 January, diocesan clergy spread the news. The riot began almost immediately. An estimated 20.000 to 30.000 people took part, including many indigenous groups as well as secular clerics and members of religious orders. The day ended with the viceroy narrowly escaping with his life and hiding in the darkest recess of the Franciscan convent, with the viceregal palace sacked and in parts reduced to ashes, and with the *audiencia real* in charge of the government of New Spain. The archbishop returned to the city on early Tuesday morning (a detailed and nuanced reconstruction of events in Ballone, 2017).

John H. Elliott (Elliott 1984, 318) described the *tumulto* as "the most dramatic challenge to royal authority in the seventeenth century, even worse than the uprising of 1692 [also in Mexico]." For Geoffrey Parker (Parker 2006, 57), New Spain was "in flames" in January 1624. Yet while there is general agreement that the *tumulto* represented a crisis of monarchical authority, the exact nature of that crisis is still subject to historical debate (Ballone 2017, 20-31). Nineteenth-century Mexican historians vainly searched for patriots struggling for Mexian Independence (for example Rivera Cambas 1872). During the twentieth century, the emphasis shifted to sociopolitical causes – such as food shortages – with the rivalry between the viceroy and the archbishop of Mexico increasingly coming into focus (Fejoo 1964). Jonathan Israel widened the chronological horizon but effectively revitalized the interpretation of the *tumulto* as an early conflict between *peninsulares* and *criollos* (Israel 1975). Richard Boyer took a different turn, describing Mexican society as a cluster of corporations and Gelves as a dedicated reformer seriously hampered by his tendency to upset vested interests (Boyer 1982). More recently, Gibran Bautista y Lugo (Bautista 2020, 311) characterized the *tumulto* as a "tríada de obediencia, rebelión y reconciliación" indicating shifts in the dynamic equilibrium of power between the appointed representatives of the crown on the one hand

and a nascent alliance of *cabildo* (municipal council) and powerful *señores de comercio* (powerful merchants and traders) and their clients on the other. The participation of the poor of Mexico City, including *indios*, *negros* and *mestizos*, caused alarm at the imperial centre, but did not at any point determine the course of the revolt. Underlying tensions would flare up again in 1692, when it became clear that the balance of power had decisively shifted in favour of the urban oligarchy (Silva Prada 2007). Angela Ballone (Ballone 2017), on the other hand, focuses on the dynamic of the relations between the secular and ecclesiastical functionaries at the apex of monarchical government during the first decades of the seventeenth century. She identifies a protracted struggle between the secular and ecclesiastical representatives of royal authority over their respective share in power and status as the main cause of the *tumulto* of 1624. While those tensions predated the escalation of January 1624 and remained a source of conflict thereafter, Ballone shows that the cluster of interlocking institutions and processes put in place to represent and preserve royal authority across the vast expanse of the Spanish monarchy rose to the challenge on this occasion.

The *tumulto*, then, emerges as largely the result of destructive competition between the nominal pillars of royal government in New Spain: the viceroy, the judges of the *audiencia real* and the archbishop of Mexico and primate of New Spain. When lingering disagreement over the respective status and share in power between the mainstays of royal authority spiralled out of control, other groups felt empowered to make demands. In brief, when the political agents integral to the functioning of the body politic refused to collaborate and compromise, sovereign void expanded and invited groups that were largely excluded from political participation under normal circumstances.

The relationship between *oidores* and viceroy had deteriorated significantly already under Gelves's immediate predecessor, Diego Fernandéz de Córdoba, first Marquis of Guadalcázar (1578-1630; viceroy 1612-1621). Grievances against Guadalcázar included his refusal to allow the *oidores* to sit on cushions or be included in blessings during public religious ceremonies as well as many instances of alleged nepotism and corruption (Ballone 2017, 61-67). The mainstay of the complaints was that Guadalcázar did not accept the *oidores* as equals in the dispensation of royal justice. Although the Council of the Indies eventually confir-

med the sense of the *oidores* as equals, it did not openly reprimand the viceroy. The tensions continued to simmer. Guadalcázar's term as viceroy was cut short, for reasons not entirely clear, and he was transferred to the Viceroyalty of Peru (viceroy 1622-1629).

The *audiencia real* in Mexico City was put in charge of New Spain until the arrival of the new viceroy, ruling autonomously for a total of six months. There is no indication in the sources that the *oidores* seriously considered a future where the *audiencia* would permanently replace the viceroy. At the same time, the experience of exerting power beyond customary boundaries clearly boosted their confidence in their ability to govern New Spain on behalf of the king. Gelves, on the other hand, considered the regency of the *audiencia* an anomaly and a de facto encroachment on the status and authority of the viceroy as the king's principal representative. Guadalcázar's critics among the members of the *audiencia* were confronted with a successor possibly even less willing to accommodate their understanding of the role and status of the *oidores*. The struggle for the lion's share of royal authority in New Spain continued unabated.

Tensions between Gelves and the *audiencia* arose almost immediately. The *oidores* took umbrage, for instance, at the fact that the viceroy – a soldier rather than a lawyer – took seriously his largely ceremonial role as president of the *audiencia*. Gelves regularly interfered in the administration of justice, overruling decisions of the *audiencia* and sidelining or even suspending individual *oidores* (Ballone 2017, 94-100). The latter quickly decided to pay him back in kind, challenging his authority and poisoning his relationship with the urban elite. The relationship between the viceroy and the archbishop took a similarly detrimental turn, although the latter, throughout his tenure, was equally at odds with the *oidores*. Pérez de la Serna was outraged, for instance, by the fact that Gelves aggressively meddled in intra-ecclesiastical conflicts and showed little respect for the immunity of ecclesiastical institutions such as the right to claim sanctuary. Both the archbishop and the *oidores* suspected Gelves of wanting to usurp and diminish their established roles and responsibilities.

Gelves, for his part, clearly saw himself as acting decisively and in the best interest of his monarch and the people of New Spain. From his vantage point, it was necessary to reform corrupted institutions and

processes root and branch, and to make sure that every part of society and body politic aligned with his vision of governance and rightful representation of monarchical authority. It was viceregal authority, however, which corroded as a result of the frequent and often public clashes between the parties and did so at a spectacular pace.

Gelves did not help himself by consistently failing to satisfy popular expectations concerning viceregal representation of royal authority. Committed to the metropolitan programme of reform and austerity, the way in which he took possession of his office had lacked the customary grandeur and sumptuousness of previous entries (Ballone 2017, 85-87). He also showed no interest in courting public opinion and was at odds with many prominent members of the ecclesiastical and secular elite almost from the outset. His conduct in office – including a controversial prohibition of gambling – made him hugely unpopular across the city. Soon after his arrival, polemical and tawdry pamphlets began to circulate across Mexico City.

Gelves' decision to arrest and force Pérez de la Serna into exile marked a dramatic escalation of the conflict. Ramiro Núñez de Guzmán (1600-1668), second Duke of Medina de las Torres and Viceroy of Naples (1637-1644), articulated the prevailing view at the time. In a missive sent to his father-in-law, the Count-Duke of Olivares (1587-1645), the favourite and chief minister of Philip IV, Medina de las Torres referred to the archbishop and the viceroy of New Spain as the "two heads of the viceroyalty" (quoted in Ballone 2017, 106). Viceroy and archbishop needed and were expected to govern interdependently. In the eyes of large swathes of the urban population, the treatment of Pérez de la Serna at the hands of Gelves amounted to a brutal dismembering of the body politic.

When popular revolt broke out, the *oidores* decided to assume viceregal authority once more. This time, though, they did so without prior authorisation from the crown. They knew this would raise eyebrows in Madrid and claimed that their hands had been forced. Their line of reasoning was clearly meant to forestall the suspicion that they had actively conspired against Gelves and had had a hand in organising the violence. The actions of the irresponsible Gelves, the *oidores* alleged, had brought the common people to the verge of "losing all respect for royal authority" (quoted in Ballone 2017, 136-7). After escaping from

the palace, the viceroy had remained in hiding and incommunicado for 11 days. The *audiencia real* as a collective simply had to take the place of the individual who had first subverted royal authority, then abandoned his office and his king. The actions of the *audiencia*, its members declared, had saved New Spain for Philip IV. A return of Gelves to government, they argued, was out of the question. Another riot and possibly the loss of New Spain would be the likely result.

The viceroy and his followers violently disagreed. The marquis claimed that in preserving his life he had also preserved the rule of the king in New Spain. Some years later, in 1629, Bernardino de Urrutia, one of Gelves' most fervent supporters, summed up the view of the viceroy's party (Ballone 2017, 186-187). Urrutia decried the *oídores* as rebels and usurpers who had wanted to overthrow the monarchy. He accused them of intentions similar to those of the leaders of the alliance of Castilian cities that had seriously threatened the rule of Charles V during the Revolt of the Comuneros (1520-1521) very early in his reign (Haliczer 1981; Gil and De Benedictis 2022). Urrutia went even further, identifying the *oidores* as clandestine disciples of the arch-heretic Martin Luther and enemies of the one true faith. Despite his best efforts, though, Bernadino de Urrutia's fiery rhetoric and vitriolic accusations failed to leave their mark.

There simply was no evidence that either the archbishop or the *oidores* had intended to challenge monarchical government, the personal authority of Philip IV, or even the institution of the viceroy as such. The quarrel of the *oidores* was with an individual whom they accused of undermining royal authority by reneging on a political compact of which the *audiencia* considered itself an integral part. The *audiencia* had a problem with Gelves and his predecessor (and successor) mainly because they felt deprived of what they considered *their* share in the exercise of monarchical authority.

The dispute between Pérez de la Serna and Gelves was even less of a threat to royal authority. It represented a dramatic escalation of the common friction between secular and ecclesiastical authorities and was set off by the usual triggers (Robbins 2022, on the complex symbiosis of crown and church). Pérez de la Serna could not tolerate a viceroy who frequently disrespected the rights and privileges of the church. It is as difficult for us today to determine the boundary between self-

interest and genuine concern for the monarchy in the thinking of the *oidores* as it was for the king and the Council of the Indies (*Consejo de Indias*) in Madrid at the time – if in fact such a boundary existed at all. Crucially, the other communities and individuals involved in the riot did not mean to challenge the authority of Philip IV or monarchical government as such either. The crowd gathered in the Zócalo was heard to shout throughout the day:

Long live the Church and the king! And death to heretics!

The organized and armed groups storming the palace took issue with the person of Diego Pimentel, Marqués de Gelves, and his conduct in office rather than the office of the viceroy as the king's representative. Tellingly, the rioters affirmed their loyalty to Philip IV by seizing the banner with the royal coat of arms from where it had been displayed on the viceregal palace. This powerful *simulacrum* of monarchical authority was taken first to the cathedral and then to the *cabildo*, the seat of municipal government. The banner indicated where royal authority legitimately resided. In the view of those actively involved in the riot, it had to be taken from the soiled hands of an unworthy representative of royal authority as a first step towards restoring the harmony between the secular and spiritual spheres. Later in the day, when the *audiencia* officially took over the government of New Spain, this happened in the presence of the royal banner and thus in the presence of the King. When the leading *oidor*, Pedro de Vergara Gaviria, stepped out into the square as the newly appointed *capitán general* (a title normally reserved for the viceroy), the banner was carried before him.

The crowd had no authority to take possession of the banner. Yet the way in which it was done – the banner was treated with great deference and showered with continuous proclamations of loyalty to the king and the unity of Crown and Church – indicated to Madrid that there had been no open or hidden desire for a radical rupture with dynasty or monarchical government. The centre would eventually accept that the protest was directed against the person of Gelves and his allegedly corrupt exercise of delegated power rather than royal authority as such. The dramatic moment a member of the clergy scaled the wall of the vice-regal palace in order to "reclaim" the royal banner is the centre-

Fig. 1. Jan Luyken (engraver), Bestorming van het Paleis van de Onderkoning van Mexico, 1623 (Gottfried 1698, 1085). With kind permission of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

piece of a prominent visual representation of the assault, a Dutch engraving from 1698.

How to deal with such a worrying expansion of sovereign void? How to deal with a situation where confrontation and rivalry between the pillars of monarchical authority in a distant locale had deteriorated into a possible attack on the royal *simulacra* and therefore on the person and office of the king? The crown had processes in place to inform and impose its judgement: *juicios de residencia* and *visitas generales*. While the former were routine examinations of an official's conduct in office, the latter represented an extraordinary measure administered in the case of serious issues or complaints. In other words, the metropolitan-monarchical centre had the tools to reserve judgement and to ensure that the sovereign void – the absence of the monarch – was managed satisfactorily by those tasked with representing the secular and spiritual aspects of monarchical authority. Transgressions would be examined and, if necessary, exposed and censured.

In November 1624, the Council of the Indies appointed Martín Carillo y Alderete (1576-1653), magistrate and inquisitor of Valladolid, as *visitador general de la Nueva España*. The purpose of the *visita* was to identify and punish those who had attacked the royal *simulacra* (the person of the viceroy, the palace, the royal banner). He was simultaneously tasked with the inspection of the viceroy's conduct in office (*juicio de residencia*). The appointment of an official of the Holy Office indicated the strength of feeling in Madrid and a desire to ensure the integrity of the investigation and the authority of the investigator. The *visita* also marked a turning point in constitutional terms: Carillo y Alderete's instructions included a provision that made him temporary viceroy in case Gelves's successor should for whatever reason be unable to govern. This clause would be included in future instructions for *visitadores*. This measure, together with the fact that a new viceroy had been appointed and installed without delay, indicated to *Audiencistas* and *Gelvistas* alike that whatever the verdict on Gelves's person and time in office, there would not be another regency without direct authorisation by the crown (Israel 1974, 170-171; Ballone 2017, 223-234). The centre would manage the customary political vacuum during the transfer of power from one viceroy to another more tightly in the future.

Overall, the *juicio de residencia* exonerated Gelves, though the *visitador* did find fault with some of his measures, including his partial suspension of the authority of the *audiencia* and the expensive appointments of extraordinary judges from his retinue. Carillo y Alderete was particularly critical of the action taken against the archbishop, which he identified as the main reason for this period of political discontent and disorder in Mexico.

The *visita general* was less conclusive. Though a highly experienced and determined official, Carillo y Alderete struggled to get to the bottom of the incident. He frequently complained about obstruction and obfuscation on the part of the individuals and factions involved. As early as May 1626 and despite his serious reservations about letting potential rebels off the hook, Carillo y Alderete advised the Council of the Indies that compromise and the restoration of peace might be preferable to strict enforcement of the law. His *visita* effectively prepared the ground for the general pardon of 1627, proclaimed by the new archbishop and

former member of the Council of the Indies, Francisco Manso y Zúñiga (1587-1655; archb. 1627-1634).

Crucial to the decision to issue the pardon were two closely connected factors. Firstly, the Council had found it impossible to decide who was ultimately responsible for the violence of 15 January 1624. Despite determined efforts, Carrillo y Alderete could not produce sufficient evidence to identify conspiracies and organisers. Secondly, and as a direct consequence, the centre concluded that it was likely that there had been no intention to challenge the authority of king and monarchy in principle. Madrid felt reasonably assured that the *vecinos* of Mexico had remained fundamentally loyal to the crown. One possibly opportunistic witness, Dr. Juan Cano, legal advisor to the *audiencia real* and the *cabildo* of Mexico City, dismissed the armed groups involved in the assault on the residence and person of the viceroy as "plebe, sin cabeza ni autor particular, ni insistida ni movida de otra persona ni comunidad hizo la dicha alteraçion"[2]. The notion of the headless mob prone to short-lived outbursts of violence when unwittingly given too much latitude assuaged the minds of the *consejeros* in Madrid and facilitated the restoration of political order.

Instead, the spotlight fell on the working relationship between the institutions representing monarchical authority: the viceroy, the *audiencia*, and the archbishop. Individuals and groups tasked with mediating the compact between king and subjects had failed in their duties. In the light of the fact that the role of the monarch as ultimate political arbiter had not been contested, the granting of a general pardon combined with mild censure, removal or sidelining of those failed mediators seemed the appropriate response.

The *tumulto* seriously affected the career of both Gelves and Pérez de la Serna. A new viceroy was appointed as early as June 1624. Gelves formally returned to office for only a few days before leaving for Spain. His successor, Rodrigo Pacheco y Osorio, Marquis of Cerralbo (1565-1652; viceroy 1624-1635), proved a more astute and subtle politician, yet would be plagued by the same conflicts over the proper exercise of royal authority. Unlike his predecessor Guadalcázar, Gelves did not

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[2]   Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Patronato, 223, r. 4, f. 304.

return to office. The archbishop was demoted and ended his days as bishop of Zamora, repeatedly but fruitlessly pleading to be allowed to return to his archdiocese in New Spain. The *audiencia* in turn was left in no doubt that it would never again assume a regency. The parts of New Spain's body politic whose fraught relations and disruptive quarrels had caused an unwarranted inflation of sovereign void and triggered mob violence against the royal *simulacra* were castigated.

Though the uneven flow of information arriving from the Americas hampered immediate action on the part of the monarchical centre, it did not prevent the absent king from altering, amending and restoring the equilibrium between representatives and mediators of royal authority. Sovereign void, badly handled, might encourage violent articulation of malcontent and threaten the cohesion of dynastic monarchy. If handled competently and flexibly through a complex cluster of institutions, processes, ceremonies and discourses –manifestations of a shared political culture and religion – the void of sovereignty allowed for mutual assurance of justice, loyalty and trust between monarch and Mexican citizenry.

The centre was well aware of the need to negotiate and constantly review the complex and often delicate relations between the different representatives of royal authority interacting in different and often distant locales within the framework of the monarchy. A *junta de tumulto* (1626–1637), an extraordinary committee, was set up to analyse and draw lessons from the chain of events leading up to the escalation of January 1624. The *junta* sought to help maintain the delicate balance between the representatives of royal authority and habitually preferred compromise and integration to confrontation and condemnation (a helpful discussion and invitation to further research in Ballone 2017, 277–288).

The Fettmilch Uprising (*Fettmilchaufstand*), 1612-16, Imperial Free City of Frankfurt am Main, Holy Roman Empire

In a different corner of the early modern Catholic world, we encounter a different facet of the relationship between sovereign void and urban

revolt. The *Fettmilch Uprising* (*Fettmilchaufstand*) of 1612–1616 occur-red within the constitutional setting of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*), early in the reign of emperor Matthias (1612-19). German nationalist historiographical tradition long regarded the Holy Roman Empire as a medieval relic and lamentably fragile constitutional structure. A much more differentiated picture has emerged in the context of the bicentennial of its dissolution in 1806 (Coy, Warschke and Sabean 2010; Evans, Schaich and Wilson 2012; Evans and Wilson 2012; Wilson, 2018). The empire is no longer regarded as one of the great failures of early modernity. Instead, historians acknowledge the built-in resilience of a highly adaptable federal structure as well as its innovative and reforming capabilities and active participation in processes of modernization and secularization of governmental structures (Headley, Hillerbrand and Papalas 2016). Notable foci of historical research are the successful establishment of secular processes and institutions for juridical resolution of conflicts between the territories of the empire or the streamlining of legal process through the introduction of Roman law across its territories. One of the aspects of its political constitution inviting further study is the question whether monarchical absenteeism was a stabilising or de-stabilising feature.

The *Fettmilchaufstand* disturbed the peace of the *Freie Reichsstadt* (Imperial Free City) Frankfurt am Main for a number of years early in the seventeenth century (on the very limited and troubled historiography see Friedrichs 1986). The city was an important financial, commercial, and political centre of some 20.000 citizens. It was predominantly Lutheran, although with Catholic and Reformed minorities, and home to the largest Jewish community in the empire (c. 2.000 heads). The site of imperial coronations since 1562, the city enjoyed special status among the urban communes of the empire.

In retrospect, the uprising heralded the end of a phase of relative stabilization and consolidation of political and social life in the empire as a result of the Peace of Augsburg (1555). Augsburg had terminated a long period of religious civil war and political turmoil in the wake of the Reformation. Secular and ecclesiastical princes and imperial free cities, especially those with extramural territories like Nürnberg, Ulm or Frankfurt am Main, eagerly set out to restore and enforce public order,

for instances by means of revising laws and imposing *Polizeiordnungen* (police ordinances) or by professionalizing the judiciary (Strauss, 1986). While the decades after the ratification of the Peace of Augsburg were generally characterized by political stability and economic growth, however, the picture was marked by significant differences. Landowners – independent farmers, but especially the nobility including the territorial princes – profited exponentially from the upsurge in profits from agricultural products that mirrored demographic developments during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century in many parts of the empire. The inflation of food prices together with demographic growth, especially at the lower end of the social scale increased social inequality in urban communes, notably imperial cities. Inward migration, especially from Catholic and Calvinist populations from the Netherlands, further complicated the social and confessional situation.

The imperial free cities were also affected by recent changes to their constitutional make-up and their status within the empire. Following his victory over the Lutheran princes in the Schmalkaldic War (1546-47), emperor Charles V had resolved to use constitutional reform in order to punish those who had sided with the Lutheran princes and to weaken Protestant opposition in every part of the empire. A crucial part of his strategy was the elimination of the guilds from urban government in favour of a strong patrician regime. The imperial city of Augsburg provided the paradigm in terms of motivation and outcome. Augsburg patricians had successfully incriminated the guild members on the city council for the fact that the city had disobeyed the emperor and sided with the Schmalkaldic League. Fear of the unpredictability and recalcitrance of the "common man" played a big part in the thinking of the imperial centre. The emperor dismissed the old city council and drastically cut down the number of councillors, now drawn largely from patrician families and allowing only few representatives from the guilds and other parts of the wider community back onto the council. By 1552, Charles had imposed constitutional reforms on twenty-seven Upper German imperial cities. One result of his intervention was the emergence of the view that the imperial cities were now in the hand of unaccountable and corrupt oligarchies, a perspective quite frequently confirmed by events.

The Peace of Augsburg further reduced the capability of imperial free cities to govern themselves. For instance, the cities were denied the *ius reformandi* granted to the princes. They did not enjoy the right to define their confessional allegiance and identity. Together with the mixed confessional make-up, the changes to constitutional structure and political process reinforced the traditional role of the emperor as supreme patron and overlord of the imperial free cities. Curating the relationship and communications with the absent monarch became ever more crucial to politically active groups within the cities.

Growing social discontent and political tensions between municipal councils and citizenry, often entwined with slow-burning confessional conflict, escalated in a variety of uprisings around 1600 (Friedrichs 1982; Blickle 1988; Whaley 2012). In Frankfurt am Main, longstanding grievances including the monopolization of government by quasi-aristocratic patrician families, excessive taxation, and the presence of a Jewish population forced to sustain themselves as money lenders and pawnbrokers in tightening economic circumstances came to a head in the summer of 1612, on the occasion of the forthcoming election of Emperor Matthias (Bothe 1906; Friedrichs 1982, 190–194; Meyn 1980). In June of that year, the city council required the entire citizenry to swear a traditional oath pledging the security of the imperial election to be held in the city. The order as such was not controversial. However, distrust and hostility between the patrician council and the artisans and merchants excluded from political participation (including members of the disenfranchised Reformed community in the city), long acute, now boiled over. The patricians had used their majority on the council to undermine the privileges and political status of other urban groups. They had failed or refused to take appropriate measures to support struggling industries and had in fact increased already oppressive taxation. The council had also disrupted the constitutional connection with the emperor by preventing citizens from presenting their grievances directly to the imperial court and by denying access to the documents confirming ancient imperial privileges. The blatantly corrupt practices of many patrician councillors fed into growing unrest among a population in increasingly difficult, sometimes desperate economic circumstances (Bothe 1906, 273–283).

As a result, the order to take the oath was met with unexpected yet determined demands for redress of economic and political grievances (the sequence of events in Bothe 1906, 283-285; 295-300). Led by the artisan guilds, the citizenry presented a list of demands first to the municipal council and then to the electors and the emperor. The list included demands for the publication of the imperial privileges that were due to be confirmed (reflecting the hope to recover legal protection from taxes imposed by the council), the control of interest rates charged by Jewish moneylenders and the expulsion of the Jewish community from the city, the control of grain prices, and access to cheap loans. The guilds fervently protested that they did not seek to overturn the patrician council but simply wished to secure their economic survival and reaffirm their place within the political-constitutional framework of the empire.

The council's initial refusal even to consider the demands lead to prolonged demonstrations and negotiations that eventually resulted in the appointment of an imperial commission. The imperial court and its intermediaries were well aware of the transgressions of the council and the way it had steadily undermined imperial legislation and authority in the city. As a result, the imperial commissioners, the Archbishop of Mainz and representatives of the Landgrave of Hessen were sympathetic to the guilds. They successfully negotiated a civic pact (*Bürgervertrag*) between patrician council and guilds (3 January 1613). Overall, the pact represented a resounding success for the guilds, for instance regarding their increased representation on the *Rat* or the restoration and confirmation of imperial privileges.

Yet the pact failed to satisfy the leader of the revolt, the eponymous Vincenz Fettmilch, a pastry baker, and other more radically inclined artisans and merchants. By now, irrefutable evidence of the council's mismanagement of public finances had come to light, including the fact that the council's actions during the Schmalkaldic War had left the city with enormous debt. Spurred on by a potent mix of outrage, conspiracy theories, misinformation, and political machinations as well as a heavy dose of antisemitism and greed, the radicals were determined to turn the tables on the patricians and effectively exclude them from civic government. They also demanded the expulsion of most, if not all, Jews from Frankfurt. In May 1614, Fettmilch and his followers seized
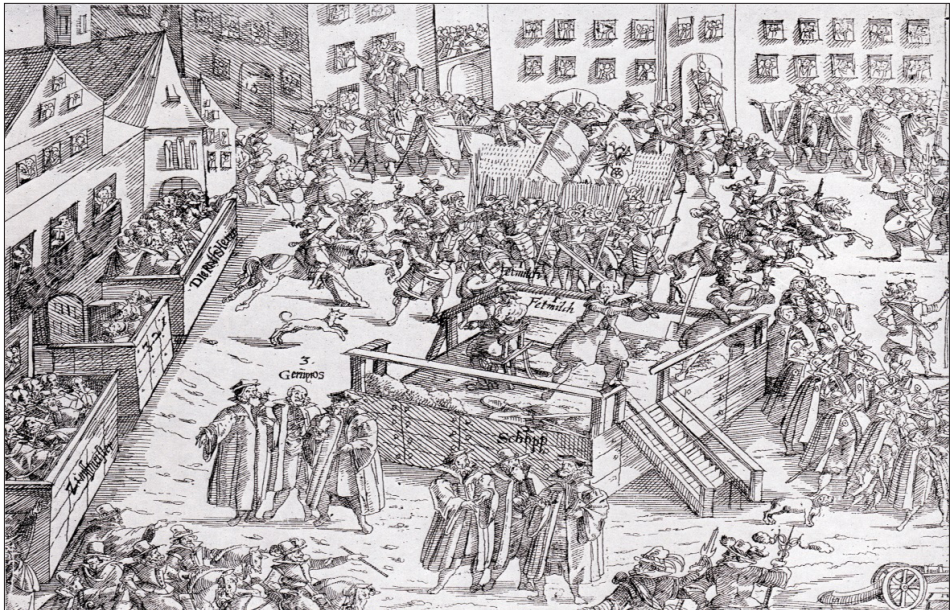
Fig. 2. Anonymous, "Fettmilchaufstand: Hinrichtung von Vincent Fettmilch, Konrad Gerngroß, Konrad Schopp und Georg Ebel am 28 February 1616 auf dem Roßmarkt in Frankfurt. Contemporary broadsheets stress the serious political nature of their crimes (crimen laesae majestatis; crimen seditionis) (Härter, 2014).

the town hall, forced the resignation of the old council, and expelled some of the patrician councillors. In August of that year, the Jewish quarter was sacked and the Jewish community driven out of the city (for the Jewish perspective see Ulmer 2001; for antisemitism in early modern Frankfurt see Boes 2013). These actions both undermined the cross-sectional appeal of the rebel council within the city and destroyed the sympathy of the imperial commissioners.

The commissioners as well as other princes, including the Palatine Elector, the leading figure among the Protestant princes in the empire, had already become concerned about the fate of the city's Catholic and Reformed communities respectively, and about the threat the disturbances Frankfurt posed to neighbouring territories. By 1613, the unrest had already spread to Worms, where the citizenry also drove out the Jewish community, and to Wetzlar, where the council was briefly overthrown and restored only when popular representatives were granted access to civic documents and oversight of the city's finances.

The prospect of an emerging regional crisis involving major players from the two confessional blocs made further imperial intervention more than likely.

The sacking of the Jewish quarter together with the expulsion of the Jewish community and patrician councillors dramatically changed the quality of the revolt. It now directly violated the status of the emperor as formal sovereign (*Stadtherr*) of Frankfurt and protector and legal guarantor of the Jewish community. What had started out as a conflict over the accountability of the patrician *Rat* and the guild's share in urban government had unwittingly turned into a challenge to imperial authority and the legal system of the Old Reich (*Reichsverfassung*). Emperor, imperial commissioners, and the Aulic Council in Vienna (*Reichshofrat*) responded by outlawing the rebels (*Reichsacht*). Pre-empting a looming imperial military intervention, members of the rebel council quickly proceeded to arrest Fettmilch and other radicals. The latter and six of his closest associates were subjected to interrogation and torture by the imperial authorities for more than a year, sentenced to death, and ceremoniously and cruelly executed in front of all Frankfurt male citizens in 1616 (on developments in early modern penal codes and political discourse see Sbriccoli 1974; De Benedictis 2013). That same day, the Jewish community was readmitted to the city and served with solemn confirmations of their future protection.

The privileges of the guilds granted only three years previously were revoked and the previous patrician council was reinstated and confirmed in its authority. It was not a simple return to the status-quo-ante, though. Imperial ordinances – some new, some reissued and asserted – put checks and balances on the council's powers, especially in terms of handling public finances.

Yet it is important to stress that the first phase of urban protests led to a negotiated settlement that had been facilitated by representatives of the emperor and met core demands of the guilds without touching upon imperial law or some of the fundamental constitutional changes imposed by Charles V. As long as grievances were aired (largely) peacefully and with due deference to imperial law and authority, emperor and princes tended to be sympathetic to the citizenry. They had worked to find a compromise. They had modified the compact between monarch and citizenry by redistributing delegated monarchical authority from

the patricians to the guilds. Their prime objective had been the main-tenance of peace and public order and the long-term de-escalation of potential points of conflict, especially in confessionally mixed areas. The effective seizure of imperial authority on the part of Fettmilch and his followers, however, threatened to become contagious and could not be tolerated. It was met with the threat of military intervention and triggered pre-emptive action on the part of the moderates among the rebels.

Conclusion

Like the *oidores* and the *tumultista* crowd in Mexico City, Vincenz Fettmilch and his supporters consistently combined protestations of loyalty to the monarch with claims to act in the best interest of mo-narchical authority. Both uprisings coalesced into a struggle over the proper share in the authority and representation of the absent monarch. Both in Mexico and Frankfurt, the rebels drew on shared European ideas and practices of popular sovereignty deeply embedded within the political ethos and constitutions of the two empires. The work of Xa-vier Gil, Manuel Herrero and José Javier Ruíz Ibañez exemplifies this persistent undercurrent of republican governmental theory, discourse and practise operating across European monarchies and empires (Gil 2002; Ruíz Ibañez 2017; Herrero 2019; Albareda and Herrero 2019). They demonstrate that civic ideology and practice were much more relevant to the ways in which early modern monarchies operated and could sustain themselves than has been assumed for so long. The rebels in Mexico and Frankfurt both claimed – and, on available evidence, firmly believed – to represent monarchical authority more truthful-ly than the hostile incumbents of delegated power (the viceroy; the Frankfurt patricians). The diverse groups that joined forces to resist and overthrow the patrician council in Frankfurt and the viceroy in Mexi-co were united in viewing their opponents as nefarious political players abusing and effectively demolishing imperial authority. The Habsburg monarchs – King Philip IV of Spain and Emperor Matthias – were de-emed supreme authority and ultimate *arbiter*. Seen from above as well

as below, both uprisings were about the right to fill the sovereign void on the local level. Why, then, was the outcome so different?

The answer is that Madrid determined that king and monarchy had not been the target of the assault on the royal *simulacra*. From the metropolitan point of view, the secular and ecclesiastical representatives of royal authority in Mexico – viceroy, archbishop, and *audiencia real* – had played a huge part in sparking the riot. The broken relationship between the two heads of the viceroyalty of New Spain in particular was more worrisome than the actions of the heterogeneous, unpredictable mob. While the marquis, the archbishop, and the *oidores* each saw themselves as faithful servants of the crown, the centre came to a different conclusion. Gelves and Pérez de la Serna were recalled because they had failed to pay heed to the fact that church and crown could not be seen to be at war with one another, whatever the contentious issues between them. The *audiencia* acting in place of the "living image of the king" had set a potentially dangerous precedent that could not be allowed to recur.

Previous rebellions – and in fact the ongoing Dutch revolt – loomed large in the mind of the Spanish imperial centre and exerted complex and contradictory pressures (Merle, Jettot and Herrero 2018). Yet Mexico in 1624 was not Castile in 1520 or Aragon in 1591 (Gascón Pérez 2010). Mexico in 1624 was not Barcelona in 1640 (Elliott 1963; Elliott and Villari 1992; Werner 1992) or Naples in 1647 (Villari 1979; Hugon 2014; Perruca Gracia 2023) either. Officials recognized the differences and opted for a conciliatory and pre-emptive approach. These differences were reflected in the way in which royal clemency was either granted or refused and the decision articulated, communicated and imposed in each case (Hugon and Merle 2016; Salinero, García Garrido and Paūn 2018; Bautista 2020). The vastness of the ocean separating Europe and the Americas demanded or at least encouraged a cautious and dilatory approach to restoring royal authority and public order. Another factor was that a policy of de-escalation and constructive improvisation was easier to implement in Catholic New Spain than in the confessionally divided Holy Roman Empire.

The Frankfurt guilds, on the other hand, snatched defeat from the jaws of political–constitutional victory. The *Bürgervertrag* was a compromise that gave them far more than they had initially hoped and asked for. The absent monarch had intervened and acted as neutral arbiter

of intra-municipal constitutional and social conflict in order to reconcile and reintegrate the warring parts of the civic body politic. More savvy political actors would have decided to cash in their winnings and play the long game. Some of the more extreme elements, however, driven by a potent mix of outrage, misunderstanding, conspiracy theories, antisemitic hate and sheer greed, pressed for radical change. While emperor and princes were initially prepared to take a conciliatory and integrative approach, they could not acquiesce to unilateral demands for constitutional change and tolerate a bold violation of the imperial protectorate of Jewish communities. Consequently, the absent monarch asserted his authority as the sovereign of the imperial free cities. The emperor withdrew his support for the rebels, outlawed the isolated Fettmilch and his followers, and put an end to the revolt. The citizenry of Frankfurt forfeits the communal liberties they had only just recovered. It would take more than a century and a half before another political compromise between patriciate and guilds was agreed. Soon, in any case, the Thirty Years War would erupt and relegate the uprising to the margins of history.

Neither the *Fettmilchaufstand* nor the *tumulto* started as or escalated into an attempt to overthrow monarchical government or dynasty. The rebels in Mexico and Frankfurt were genuine and consistent in their allegiance to king and emperor and wedded to dynastic monarchy as a form of government. Both cases exemplify a wider point about the theory and practice of resistance and rebellion in early modern societies. Depending on context, rebellion did not invariably lead to repression, severe punishment, more authoritarian government and a more subdued society (Gil 2024). The Frankfurt rebels forfeit a different outcome just as they had it in their grasp. Operating within a political–constitutional structure that reflected the tensions and anxieties of cross-confessional conflict in the empire, they lost their liberties due to exuberant political hubris. In a situation where it was impossible to establish the nature of the challenge to monarchical authority with any sense of certainty, the Council of the Indies and the king in Madrid, on the other hand, accepted the protestations of loyalty on the part of Mexican subjects at face value and prioritized the mending of constitutional flaws over retaliatory punishment. In both cases, the outcome confirmed and consolidated the role of the absent monarch as the ultimate political arbiter.

Each in its own way, Mexico and Frankfurt confirm that sovereign void had the potential to consolidate rather than weaken early modern monarchical authority faced with crisis and revolt.

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