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THE PUEBLA MESTA ORDINANCES OF 1556 AND 1560

edited by KEITH W. ALGIER

THE MESTA, a livestock owners' association, was one of many Iberian institutions brought to the New World by the Spanish conquerors. Of Spain's several kingdoms in America, it was established only in New Spain. Although the Mesta was not introduced as far north as New Mexico, it nonetheless had significant and lasting effects on stock raising there and the borderlands of New Spain which were to become a part of the United States. There are, for example, many similarities between livestock laws enacted in California and the Southwest and Mesta ordinances, particularly those pertaining to branding practices, thefts of animals, and the disposition of stray stock. It is probable that the powerful stockgrowers' associations which played such an important role in the trans-Mississippi West were patterned after New Spain's Mesta.

The Mesta originated in Castile during the Middle Ages in response to problems faced by livestock raisers. The Castilian crown encouraged the growth of the organization and was responsible for its formal institutionalization in 1273. Royal interest in the organization was stimulated by a desire to encourage the development of the lucrative wool export trade and to provide a counterpoise to certain disruptive elements, chiefly the unruly nobility, in the kingdom. By 1500 the Mesta was serving the crown in still another way. Forced loans from the organization and its wealthy members furnished a convenient source of income when other revenue measures failed.
The Castilian Mesta was a monolithic, centralized, national body directly administered by the king through the senior member of the Council of Castile, who also served as president of the Mesta. The chief function of the organization was to facilitate the movement of stock, mainly sheep, to and from winter grazing lands. To ensure the unobstructed passage of migrant flocks, officials called entregadores periodically traversed the more important migration routes, or cañadas, to make certain that they remained open. Entregadores also were responsible for judging disputes between herders and the inhabitants of towns and farms along the way. The only other official of any consequence, the alcalde de mesta, administered the disposal of stray stock and settled disputes between members. Each of the four administrative districts into which the Mesta was divided elected its own alcalde de mesta.

Shortly after the conquest of New Spain, the need for a livestock growers organization arose. In an environment never before subjected to intensive grazing, cattle, sheep, and horses proliferated at an astonishing rate. Stock owners consequently found it impossible to maintain herds in an adequate state of surveillance and lost large numbers to thieves. Significant numbers simply strayed from pasture lands. The chronic shortage of labor which plagued New Spain throughout the sixteenth century aggravated this problem.

Because New Spain's livestock raisers faced a different set of problems from their Iberian counterparts, New Spain's version of the Mesta evolved in a radically altered form. That some sort of change occurred is recognized in the published studies of the topic, but the precise nature of the change has never been clearly established. The most striking feature of the Mesta's translation to the New World was its transformation from a powerful national institution into an innocuous parochial organization. Its local character is clearly reflected in two sets of ordinances promulgated in 1542 and 1574. The first code, formulated by the Mexico City cabildo in 1537 and approved by the crown in 1542, empowered the city's municipal council to elect alcaldes de mesta to supervise the activities of the organization. Alcaldes de mesta were obliged to
preside over semi-annual meetings held for the purpose of settling disputes between Mesta members and for redistributing stray livestock.9

The 1574 code was far more comprehensive, but it contained no provisions which changed the local character of the organization.10 In fact, it formally decentralized the Mesta by empowering the principal city in each diocese to elect its own alcaldes de mesta.

The basic organizational departure from the parent institution is indicated by the absence of a hierarchic superstructure to link and control local Mestas. Indeed, it is possible that New Spain's Mesta was not even patterned after the national Castilian institution. Before the conquest of the New World there existed in Castile a number of local Mestas which had no connection with the national organization. The city of Granada, for example, had such an organization, and its ordinances contain many of the features incorporated into the 1542 ordinances of Mexico City.11

The fact that the Mexican ordinances failed to provide for the creation of the office of entregador suggests that cañadas were not a matter for concern among New Spain's stockmen. The ordinances of 1542 and 1574 also contain ample evidence that the function of the organization was fundamentally different from that of the Castilian Mesta. The 1542 ordinances have three provisions governing branding practices12 and three designed to facilitate the return of stray stock to owners.13 The remaining eleven ordinances deal with membership requirements, prerogatives and duties of officials, and general administrative procedures. No provision is made for the establishment of cañadas.

The code enacted in 1574 reflects the same overriding preoccupation with protecting and maintaining herds, and lack of concern for migration routes. Twenty-three ordinances deal, directly or indirectly, with the problem of livestock thefts,14 and an additional ten are designed to force livestock men to adopt ranching practices which would minimize rustling and prevent animals from stray­ing.15 Eleven ordinances regulate breeding practices,16 and four prescribe the methods to be used in redistributing stray stock.17 Only one of the eighty-three ordinances included in the code is
devoted to cañadas, and it merely provides that alcaldes de mesta are to establish sheep walks where necessary. These officials had jurisdiction over matters pertaining to the Mesta only during those periods when their respective organizations were in session, and because no officials were created to maintain cañadas, it appears that sheep walks were a matter of only casual concern in New Spain in contrast to the dominant role they played in the Castilian Mesta. Of the remaining provisions, eight regulate the slaughter and sale of meat, five proscribe encroachment on Indian lands by stock raisers, seven cover conservation practices and land grants, and fourteen deal with general administrative matters.

The altered character of the Mesta in New Spain is also reflected in two sets of previously unpublished ordinances formulated by the membership of the Mesta organization for the Puebla area in 1556 and 1560. These are of particular interest because they represent the conception of a livestock growers' association based on actual local conditions and on the day-to-day problems faced by stock raisers. An analysis of the ordinances reveals that both sets, like the Mexico City codes of 1542 and 1574, reflect a preoccupation with the protection of stock and redistribution of strays. Of equal significance is the fact that, although the Puebla area was one of the principal sheep-raising centers of the realm, no provision is made for establishing cañadas.

**ORDINANCES**

Original copy of the ordinances drawn up by Hernando de Villanueva to regulate the Mesta council and livestock raising of the city and diocese of [Puebla] de los Angeles. These ordinances were enacted in Napaluca in 1556 and confirmed by don Luis de Velasco, viceroy of New Spain.

This is a true and correct copy made of ordinances that appear to have been drawn up by Señor Hernando de Villanueva, alcalde de mesta, and livestock raisers in a Mesta council meeting at the pueblo of Napaluca. The content of this said copy is as follows:
In the pueblo of Napaluca on the eighth day of the month of September, Year of Our Lord 1556, the Very Magnificent Señor Hernando de Villanueva, alcalde de mesta in the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles and its diocese for his Majesty, presided over a general Mesta meeting in the said pueblo in my presence, Bernaldino López, notary appointed by the said alcalde for the said Mesta. The brothers of the Mesta of this said diocese who were present met in council in the presence of the said alcalde, and of me, the aforesaid notary: The following were present: Juan Sarmiento, Pedro Hernández Asencio, Pedro de la Torre, Diego de Villanueva, Juan de Nava, Alonso González, Pablo Martín the elder, Pedro de Navarro, Juan Martín de Plasencia, Sebastián Rey, Juan Gómez, Rodrigo Alonso for Francisco Rubio, Miguel Navarro, Fernando de Busto, Alonso González, Alonso Pérez for Francisco de Reynoso, Francisco Vásquez, Pedro Calderón, Alonso Moreno, and Hernán Velásquez. And the said brothers and honorable council of the Mesta, being convened in the manner stated with the said alcalde presiding, stated that they are assembled here in the said pueblo for the purpose of considering and regulating certain matters necessary to enact certain ordinances beneficial to the said council of the Mesta and to the livestock that graze in this said diocese. The aforesaid alcalde and brothers of the Mesta, being convened as has been said, enacted same in the following form and manner:

1. First, they ordered that the alcaldes de mesta of the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles shall be obligated to leave the said city each year to attend a general Mesta meeting in the pueblo of Napaluca to be held from the day of San Juan in June to the day of Santiago. And the date set upon which all the brothers must assemble shall be the day of San Pedro y San Pablo annually. The said brothers of the Mesta, present and future, shall be obligated to come and attend the said Mesta as often as they are able during the said period and in particular they shall be obligated to come to the said pueblo of Napaluca for the Mesta, or to send their mayordomos or herdsmen to attend it, on the day of San Pedro y San Pablo every year, under penalty of a fine of ten pesos de oro
de minas for each one who may fail to do so, to be applied for the expenses and costs of the said Mesta.

2. Item, they ordered that during grazing periods, the said alcaldes shall be required to visit the areas and places where sheep go to graze; namely Tlaxcala, Tepeaca, Guexocingo, Cholula, Tecamachalco, and Cachula. And the brothers of the Mesta and their herders who may be grazing their flocks in any of the said pueblos where the said alcalde de mesta is shall be obligated to answer the summons of the alcalde de mesta under penalty of a fine of ten pesos de oro de minas for the first failure to come when summoned, and for the second, twenty pesos de minas, and for the third they will incur a fine of fifty pesos de minas to be applied in the prescribed manner, in addition to being punished to the full extent of the law.

3. Item, they ordered that each of the said brothers shall be obliged to bring and have brought to the said pueblo of Napa-luca, to the corral assigned for this purpose in the said pueblo on the said day of San Pedro y San Pablo every year any livestock they may have at their hacienda that does not belong to them; under penalty that anyone who violates this order shall pay a fine of one peso de oro común for each head of stock he may be found to have after the said day, the amount to be applied as has been said. And the owner of the hacienda where such livestock may be found shall pay half of the said fine, and the herder or foreman there may be of said hacienda shall pay the other half, so that each one may take proper care. In addition, they shall be punished with all rigor of the law if there is proof of their maliciously keeping possession of the said livestock. And this livestock is to be deposited with the mayordomo of the said Mesta to be kept, as is the current practice, when there is no owner who recognizes it. And they so ordered.

4. Moreover, they ordered that no person shall dare to re-brand or brand any livestock not belonging to him under penalty of perpetual exile from this diocese, in addition to being punished to the full extent of the law.

5. Item, they ordered that no person may have a brand or mark
to use on his livestock that another may have. And in this case, the person who may have had the brand and mark for the longest time may keep it. And the other person who has had it more recently shall be obliged to give it up at once under penalty of twenty pesos de minas applied to the expenses of the said Mesta, in addition to confiscation of the stock he may brand with this brand after he has been ordered not to use it, also to be applied to the said Mesta.

6. Item, they ordered that each year, on the day of the general Mesta, a mayordomo and procurator are to be elected and named, who shall be two of the brothers of the Mesta chosen by the alcalde and other members of the said Mesta. Each shall have the duty and care of fulfilling the obligations of his office and what may be to the benefit and growth of the said Mesta. And these persons shall swear in legal form to do so and perform the duties of his office and what may be to the benefit and growth of the said Mesta. And these persons shall swear in legal form to do so and fulfill the obligations of office. And those elected and named shall be obliged to accept these offices under penalty of fifty pesos de minas each, to be applied as above. In addition they shall be compelled to accept and serve under the full force of the law. And each of them shall be obliged to render an accounting annually and pay over what they may have taken in.

7. Item, on these plains of Ozumba and in other places where there are sheep estancias there is great need of labor, which is sought by the owners of said stock at great expense and effort. And after they find help it has happened that some people have gone about hiring it away, which redounds in great injury to the stock and haciendas because they are left without herders, and the owners cannot find more herders quickly enough. Therefore, in order to avoid this situation they ordered that any herders, Spaniards, mestizos, or mulattoes who may contract with the owners of the said stock, or with their mayordomo or foremen, to guard the stock shall be obliged to serve and shall serve for the time they agreed to do so, under penalty of being pursued and brought back at their own expense to serve again for the entire time to which
they agreed, and to lose the time served before. And no stock owner or his foreman shall dare to take or receive into his service any of these herders who have thus left the said haciendas without finding out from the owner whether the herdsman he employed before had fulfilled his obligation to him, under penalty of twenty pesos de minas to be applied as above.

8. In addition, they ordered that in regard to service by Indian men and women who work for wages on the said estancias, no stock owner nor his foreman shall dare to hire them away from where they are in order to take them to their haciendas. Nor can they take them on without first finding out whether they have served where they were for the time to which they were obligated, under penalty of twenty pesos de minas applied as above.

9. Item, they ordered that no person whatsoever on these plains of Ozumba or in the vicinity, or anywhere else, may have more than one hundred head of sheep unless he has his estancia on which to keep them, or a share in some estancia, or permission from an estancia owner, under penalty of loss and confiscation of the stock he may have in any other way. Moreover he shall incur a fine of twenty pesos de oro de minas to be applied as above.

10. Furthermore, inasmuch as there are no funds of its own in the treasury of the Mesta, and because up to now many things beneficial to it have not been done, and, as a result, the stock and its owners have suffered and suffer great injury, there is need of funds and for a way of obtaining them. Therefore, they ordered that on the day of the general Mesta each year, the alcalde and brothers of the said Mesta shall levy upon the brothers of the said Mesta the amount of pesos de oro that may be needed for the benefit and good of the said Mesta, and the brothers shall each be obligated to pay his share. And for this purpose pledges can be taken from them to compel them to pay, with all the force of the law.

11. Moreover, they ordered that the alcalde de mesta be given a salary of two pesos de oro de minas for each day he is occupied with its affairs, and the notary shall receive one peso de oro de
minas. This is to be paid out of the fines applied for the said Mesta or out of the pesos de oro belonging to the said Mesta.

12. They ordered that no one of any class whatsoever may buy any sheep if he is not a known stock raiser; and that the buyer, once he has bought stock, shall come within three days to show it to the alcalde de mesta and his notary, under penalty of losing stock he may buy in any other way and of fifty pesos de minas, applied as above.

These said ordinances were drawn up in the said pueblo of Napaluca by the said alcalde and brothers of the Mesta mentioned and listed above. And they said that they begged and petitioned the Most Illustrious Lord don Luis de Velasco, Viceroy and Governor for his Majesty in this New Spain to confirm them and order that they be observed and fulfilled as they stand because this is necessary for the welfare, benefit, and perpetuation of the said Mesta. And those who knew how to write signed their names, along with the said alcalde. Fernando de Villanueva, Juan Sarmiento, Diego de Villanueva, Francisco de Reynoso, Juan Ruiz, Diego de Ojeda, Juan Martín, Bartolomé Rodríguez, Martín López Mellado, Pablo Martín, Juan García, Pedro Hernández Asencio, Pablo Martín, Juan de Nava, Alonso González, San Juan de Zúñiga. Before me, Bernaldino López, notary.

This said copy of the said ordinances was made and taken in this said city of [Puebla] de los Angeles in this New Spain on the twenty-ninth day of the month of May of the year 1557. And I issued it at the petition of Juan Sarmiento, alcalde de mesta. And Alonso de Mata, Juan de San Vicente, and Francisco Muñoz, residents of this city, were present as witnesses to see it corrected and collated with the said original. And I, Andrés de Herrera, notary public and of the cabildo for his Majesty in this said city of [Puebla] de los Angeles in this New Spain, had this said copy written and made of the said ordinances, to which I refer. And I therefore placed this my signum, which is as appears here, in attestation. Andrés de Herrera, notary public and of the cabildo.
CONFIRMATION BY THE MOST EXCELLENT VICE ROY OF THIS NEW SPAIN

In the city of Mexico, on the tenth day of the month of June of the year 1557 the most Illustrious Lord don Luis de Velasco, Viceroy and Governor for his Majesty in this New Spain, having seen the above ordinances, which appear to have been drawn up by the brothers of the council of the Mesta in the pueblo of Napaluca on the eighth day of September of the year 1556, said that he ordered and commanded that the first ordinance, by which it is ordered that a Mesta meeting be held in Napaluca every year, be observed and fulfilled.

In regard to the second ordinance, the alcaldes de mesta in the pueblo of Napaluca and Valley of Ozumba shall inspect the flocks and estancias and take any necessary action. And in the other pueblos where they may pasture in summer the said alcaldes de mesta shall not put [the ordinances] into effect, but the alcaldes mayores or other justices of these places.

And in regard to the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh ordinances, let them be fulfilled as they stand, except that the penalty of perpetual exile in the fifth shall be less severe, unless it may be in accordance with the laws of the Mesta.

And in regard to the eighth ordinance, let it be observed and fulfilled, provided that in any cases of an Indian man or woman being forced into service against his will, the justices can enter such estancias and place him at liberty.

And in regard to the ninth ordinance, let it be fulfilled.

And in regard to the tenth, let it also be observed and fulfilled, provided that the assessment made on the brothers of the Mesta be with the consent of the said brothers.

And in regard to ordinances eleven and twelve, let them be observed and put into effect, provided that the salary of the alcalde de mesta and that of the notary who make the investigation be the same salary that former alcaldes de mesta received when they made inspections before this ordinance was enacted.
His Lordship orders that all this be observed and put into effect and that no person violate it under penalty of one hundred pesos de oro for his Majesty's treasury. Don Luis de Velasco. By order of his Lordship, Antonio de Turcios.

NEW ORDINANCES

In the Pueblo of Napaluca, which is on the plains of Ozumba, on the thirtieth day of the month of June of the year 1560, holding general Mesta meeting in accordance with the Mesta ordinances confirmed by the Most Illustrious Viceroy of New Spain, with the Magnificent Lord Diegos Cortés, alcalde of the said Mesta and brotherhood in the diocese of Tlaxcala, presiding, the livestock men and brothers of the Mesta who were in the said pueblo, having met with the said alcalde, as well as the Very Magnificent Lord Licenciado Cabellos, alcalde mayor in the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles and judge of the residencia against the former alcaldes of the said Mesta in the said diocese, and also Francisco de Reynoso, Juan Sarmiento, Juan Rodríguez de San José, Bartolomé de Fuenlabrada, Martín López Mellado, Pedro Hernández del Cerro, Pedro Hernández Asencio, Juan de Nava, Diego Muñoz, Pablo Martín, Juan Martín del Campo, Juan Martín de Plasencia, Juan Ruiz, Francisco Vásquez, Alonso González, Alonso de Benavides, Miguel Navarro, Francisco Martín, and Rodrigo Martín, who said they were livestock owners and brothers of the Council of the Mesta: Having assembled to order and decree that which may be to the benefit of the said council, they discussed that inasmuch as when Hernando de Villanueva was alcalde de mesta, certain ordinances had been enacted and that later, in view of what experience has shown regarding what was in the best interests of the said council and brothers, and in view of certain disorders which had occurred, it was advisable to add certain other ordinances, which they drew up and resolved upon as follows:

1. In the first place, they agreed and resolved that because by the said ordinances previously enacted by the said brothers and
council of the Mesta, it is ordered and provided that the general Mesta meeting be held annually in the pueblo of Napaluca on the day of San Pedro y San Pablo; and because the people who assemble for the said Mesta, and the herders and herdsmen, are many, and a large amount of stray stock is brought to the said Mesta, and there is no place in the said pueblo large enough for all the people to gather or for the stock to be enclosed without causing harm and vexation to the natives of said pueblo, let a house be made and built, outside the said pueblo and near it on the savanna, in the place least prejudicial to said natives. And let the site be bought from them for a just price. Let there be lodging and stable for the people who come to the said Mesta and a place appointed where the alcaldes de mesta may hold audience; let a corral be made by this house to enclose the stray cattle brought to the said Mesta.

2. Item, they resolved and ordered that because great disorder has been noted up to now in the collection and safe keeping of the money made from the sale of wild and stray stock and from the fines levied and applied for Mesta expenses in accordance with the said ordinances, and because it is necessary to remedy this situation, they ordered that a chest be bought. This is to have four keys which, for the present until another arrangement seems advisable, shall be placed in the keeping of the notary of the cabildo of the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles, who is notary of said Mesta; and one of the said keys is to be kept by one of the alcaldes of the said Mesta, another by the mayordomo, another by the procurator of the said Mesta, and the other by the said notary. And any and all monies which may be applied for and belong to the said Mesta shall go into this chest.

3. Item, they decided and ordered that two large books bound in parchment or leather should be bought. These are ordinarily to be kept in the said chest, and in one all the pesos de oro which go into the said chest are to be recorded with a statement of whence they came. And the persons who are to hold the said keys as stated above shall sign this. And in the other book shall be recorded and set down the brands of the stock which all owners
have and may have and place on their stock. And the royal laws of
the Mesta and its ordinances shall be kept in said chest so that
there may be an account and record of everything.

4. Item, they decided and ordered that every year on the said
day of San Pedro y San Pablo, at the said general Mesta meeting,
six persons, stock owners, brothers of the Mesta and its council,
shall be elected and named by the stock owners and brothers of
the Mesta, from the richest and most honored among them, in
order that these along with the alcalde or alcaldes of the Mesta may
elect and name a mayordomo and procurator of the Mesta as
well as consider the matters that may be beneficial and necessary
to the said Mesta and its brothers and their stock; and they shall
also take accounting from the previous year’s officials. And the
salaries which are to be paid to the alcalde and notary of the said
Mesta and whatever it may be necessary to spend on its affairs,
shall be drawn by the said six persons, along with the alcalde or
alcaldes there may be of the said Mesta, and these drafts shall be
placed in the chest. And these persons shall be responsible for
having placed in said chest all the pesos de oro which may be
applied for or belong to said Mesta under any circumstances.

5. Item, they decided and ordered that the six brothers of the
Mesta elected according to the fourth ordinance shall all assemble
along with the alcalde or alcaldes de mesta, and no one else, to
consider, and they shall consider, all matters to the benefit of the
Mesta, after they have first discussed with and informed the ma-
jority of the brothers of the Mesta and heard their opinions and
understood their wishes concerning the matters to be discussed and
considered, in order that the affairs to be attended to and settled
may be considered in a more orderly way, and be brought to a
conclusion more quickly.

6. Item, they decided and ordered that in the place appointed
for the alcalde or alcaldes de mesta to hold their audiences, as
stated in the first ordinance, a large board shall be hung, and on it
the tax schedule of the kingdom and the ordinances of the Mesta
shall be posted, all written in a good legible hand.

7. Item, the alcalde or alcaldes de mesta, with the six brothers
who are to be elected in conformity with these ordinances, shall, on the day of San Pablo y San Pedro which is the day of the general Mesta meeting, elect two inspectors who shall be present to watch the stock taken from the corral and to take notice of the brands so that each owner may take his own and no others. And after the Mesta these inspectors shall be obligated to visit the sheep estan­cias of stock owners who have not come to the Mesta or have not sent the stray stock they may have had on their estancias, and they shall force them to bring all the stray stock they have and give it to its owners. That which appears to have [no] owner they shall place in the corral with those [strays] still remaining. And they shall inform the alcalde de mesta of their actions under the pen­alty that any of the said inspectors who fails to do so shall incur a fine of six pesos de oro común for expenses of the Mesta. And when one of them so fails in his duty, another shall be elected to do what he should have done. And these inspectors shall be given a moderate salary determined by the six brothers and the alcalde. This is to be paid out of the costs and funds of the said Mesta.

8. Item, they decided and ordered that after the general Mesta meeting is over and terminated, each stock owner must remove his stock from the corral. Any stray stock remaining shall belong to the Mesta and remain for its expenses, with the provision that on the two days following the said day when the Mesta [meeting] is held, it shall be brought and placed in the corral for the growers to return to see whether there is any more of their stock. And be­cause experience has shown that when this unclaimed stock is kept from one year to the next, it is either lost or costs more than it is worth, they decided and ordered that if there are less than five hundred head left after the said procedure has been followed, they shall be sold, and if there are more than that, they shall be kept for a year so that if the owner appears during this period it may be given to him.

9. Item, they decided and ordered that all the stock owners and their foremen shall be obliged to provide corral to all who may ask it, both in summer pastures and elsewhere, in order that each may take his stock. And he who does not provide it shall incur a fine of
six pesos de minas for expenses of the said Mesta. And upon proof with two witnesses that corral was asked and not granted, the offender shall be condemned to the said fine without further judicial proceedings.

10. Item, they decided and ordered that if the two alcaldes de mesta cannot hold it [the Mesta meeting] together; if one of them is a stock owner and the other is not, the stock owner shall go to hold the general Mesta meeting because he will know best what is necessary. And if both go to hold the general Mesta meeting they shall not collect more salary than that assigned to one, which they are to divide.

11. Item, they decided and ordered that no servant of a stock owner who has made a writing and contract of any kind to serve the other in the guarding of his stock shall be able to agree or make any contract or agreement with a third person until he has completed the time to which he agreed, under penalty of ten pesos de oro de minas for expenses of the Mesta. And no stock owner can be obligated, nor can one, take him on or make a contract with him, until he has fulfilled [the previous one], under penalty of thirty pesos de minas for expenses of the Mesta.

12. Item, they decided and ordered that on the day of San Pablo y San Pedro when the general Mesta meeting is held, all stock owners shall bring to it all the stray stock they have on their estancias and put it in the corral the following day, showing it to the alcalde and notary of the Mesta as provided in the other ordinances. And they shall bring it separately and not mixed with the rest, and with the ewes they have that have given birth they shall bring the lambs branded with the marks of their mothers so that he who claims them [the mothers] can take all together, under penalty of six pesos de minas for expenses of the said Mesta.

13. Item, they decided and ordered that since experience has shown that because the proprietary notary of the Mesta, who is the cabildo notary of the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles, does not attend the general Mesta [meeting], there has been disorder both in the said Mesta and in the proceedings and condemnations that have been made for its expenses. And it has given occasion to the
alcaldes de mesta to exceed their proper functions. Therefore they ordered that henceforth the said notary of the cabildo of the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles shall be obliged to come in person every year to the said general Mesta [meeting] and be present for twelve days, and if necessary to remain longer, up to thirty days, the time during which the Mesta is to last according to the previous ordinances, if the six brothers who are to be elected think he should do so. And in view of what he is understood to earn by his office when he is at home, and of his obligatory absence, they ordered that for the said twelve days and the additional ones the said six brothers may decide he shall be present at the said Mesta, he shall be given from the funds and assets belonging to it three pesos de oro de minas per day. And in the event that because of absence or illness he cannot come in person, he shall be obliged to send in his place one of the notaries public of the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles, or another royal notary, to whom they ordered given and paid a salary of two pesos of said oro de minas per day. When said Mesta is over, this notary must hand over to said notary of the cabildo of the said city of [Puebla] de los Angeles all the proceedings and documents executed in his presence concerning and pertaining to said Mesta, in order that said proprietary notary may have and be able to give an account of everything.

14. Item, they decided and ordered that one of the alcaldes of the said general Mesta shall be obliged to stay at the said Mesta, which is held in said pueblo of Napaluca every year, for twelve days, and if the said six brothers who are elected so decide, they shall remain for additional days, provided that these do not exceed the thirty days decreed in the preceding ordinances. And the said alcaldes shall be given a salary of three pesos de oro de minas per day as ordered in the case of said notary. And if both alcaldes of the said Mesta wish to attend it, they may do so provided that no more salary is given to both than the said three pesos de oro de minas, one and one-half pesos each. This is to be paid in the same way as ordered in paying said notary.

They decided that these said ordinances are to be observed and fulfilled henceforth, and they petitioned and begged the Most

CONFIRMATION

IN THE CITY OF MEXICO ON THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH OF AUGUST OF THE YEAR 1560, BEFORE THE VERY ILLUSTRIOUS LORD DON LUIS DE VELASCO, VICEROY AND CAPTAIN GENERAL FOR HIS MAJESTY IN THIS NEW SPAIN, THESE ARTICLES OF ORDINANCE WERE PRESENTED BY DIEGO DE VILLANUEVA, REGIDOR OF THE CITY OF [PUEBLA] DE LOS ANGELES. AND CONFIRMATION OF SAID ARTICLES HAVING BEEN REQUESTED IN ITS NAME, AND HIS LORDSHIP HAVING SEEN AND READ THEM, HE SAID:

WITH REGARD TO ARTICLES 8, 13, AND 14 OF SAID ORDINANCES LET THEIR EXECUTION AND CONSIDERATION BE STAYED AND SUSPENDED FOR THE PRESENT. AND LET ALL THE REST BE OBSERVED AND FULFILLED AS THEY STAND UNTIL OTHER PROVISIONS AND ORDERS ARE GIVEN; AND IF IT WAS NECESSARY, HE CONFIRMED AND DID CONFIRM THEM. AND HE SO PROVIDED AND ORDERED. DON LUIS DE VELASCO. BY ORDER OF HIS LORDSHIP, ANTONIO DE TURCIOS.


NICOLAS HERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE,
NOTARY OF THE CABildo (rubric)
We, the undersigned notaries, hereby certify and attest that Nicolás Hernández de la Fuente, who appears to have signed and placed his signum on the above certified copy, is a notary of the King our Lord and of the cabildo of this city of [Puebla] de los Angeles for chief notary Marcos Rodríguez Zapata. And the transactions, decrees, and legal instruments executed before him have been and are given complete credit and credence in and out of court. Done in the city of [Puebla] de los Angeles in New Spain on the 28th day of May in the year 1618. And we do not charge fees and to this we likewise attest.

Juan de Zamora, notary (rubric)
Hernando de Rojas, notary public (rubric)
Gabriel Alvarez, royal notary (rubric)

THE SECULAR CABILDO OF [PUEBLA] DE LOS ANGELES, 1619

Sir: The city of [Puebla] de los Angeles, on its own behalf and in the name of its citizens and of all the Mesta brothers of this diocese, in order to better comply with the dispositions of the laws of the Mesta of the years 1557 and 1560, states that all the brothers of the Mesta and the alcaldes de mesta enacted the ordinances herewith presented by general agreement. Don Luis de Velasco, then viceroy of these provinces, approved them. And because it is necessary for the conservation and raising of stock that [the ordinances] be put into effect in their entirety in every respect, [the petitioners] beg your Majesty to be pleased to order their confirmation and approval and to issue your royal cedula that they be observed inviolably, for this will serve the best interests of your Majesty, and all that kingdom will receive benefit and favor.
NOTES


2. For a discussion of the relationship between New Spain's Mesta and livestock ranching in the United States, see *ibid.*, pp. 192-204.


4. The best and most complete account of the early development of New Spain's livestock is found in François Chevalier, *La formación de los grandes latifundios en México*, trans. by Antonio Alatorre (México, 1956).

5. The seriousness of New Spain's labor problem and its effects on the area's economy is suggested by Gómez de Cervantes, *La vida económica y social de Nueva España al finalizar del siglo XVI*, ed. by A. M. Carreño (México, 1944), pp. 100-102.


7. The cabildo was, and still is in many Spanish American countries, the institution responsible for local government.

8. The letter from the king which approved the ordinances contains their complete text, and it can be found in *Actas de cabildo de la ciudad de México*, 22 vols., (México, 1889-1911), vol. 4, pp. 313-15.


10. The text of these ordinances has been published in Eusebio Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria de todos los autos acordados de la real audiencia y sala de esta Nueva España*, 2 vols. (México, 1787), vol. 1, 2nd fol., pp. 27-54.

11. Extracts from the Granada ordinances can be found in Klein, pp. 364-67.

12. Ordinances 5, 6, 7.


15. Ordinances 15, 18, 19, 37, 49, 55, 58, 59, 63, 64.

16. Ordinances 6, 22, 23, 33, 47, 48, 51, 61, 71, 72, 73.

17. Ordinances 2, 5, 7, 10.

18. Ordinance 36.

19. Ordinances 17, 24, 26, 27, 34, 35, 44, 80.

20. Ordinances 13, 40, 50, 75, 78.
21. Ordinances 3, 6, 8, 74, 79, 81, 82.
22. *Mesta Ordinances, 1556-1619*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Cartas de Indias, Caja 2, num. 52. The author is indebted to Dr. France V. Scholes for his permission to publish this document.
23. An Indian village located about thirty-five miles northeast of Puebla de los Ángeles.
24. Viceroy Velasco I served from 1551 to 1564.
25. Feasts of St. John the Baptist, June 24, and St. James the Apostle, July 25.
27. Indian villages situated in the general Puebla de los Ángeles area.
28. The cabildo was, and still is in many Spanish American countries, the institution responsible for local government.
29. Royal officials who possessed both political and judicial authority and who ruled political units called *alcaldías mayores*. They therefore had jurisdiction over cabildos located within their respective jurisdictions.
30. Specially designated officials who conducted judicial reviews at the end of an official’s term of office.
31. The regidor was a cabildo official whose functions were similar to those of a city councilman.