

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

JUSTICE AS CHECKS AND BALANCES **Indigenous Claims in the Courts of Colonial Mexico**

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World Politics

doi: 10.1017/S0043887121000125

Replication data are available at:

Franco-Vivanco, Edgar. 2021. "Replication data for: Justice as Checks and Balances: Indigenous Claims in the Courts of Colonial Mexico." Harvard Dataverse, V 1. doi: 10.7910/DVN/IEM6DL.

Supplementary materials for
Justice as Checks and Balances: Indigenous Claims
in the Courts of Colonial Mexico

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Contents

S1	Political context	1
S1.1	State-building effect	5
S2	Welfare effects	7
S3	The Lesley Byrd Simpson files	9
S3.1	Differentiating between perpetrators	14
S4	Human coding	19
S4.1	Workshop and coding rules	19
S4.2	Intra-coder reliability measures	21
S5	Geographic variation	23
S6	Indigenous uprisings and claims	27
S6.1	Do protest cause claims?	29
S7	Building the power of local elites variable	30
S8	Assumptions for strategic ruling of cases	34
S9	Addressing Litigant-Driven Selection Bias	37
S9.1	Plaintiff-driven bias	37
S9.2	Defendant-driven bias	40
S10	Single-topic cases and concurrences	42
S11	Analysis of Colonial Archives	44

S1 Political context

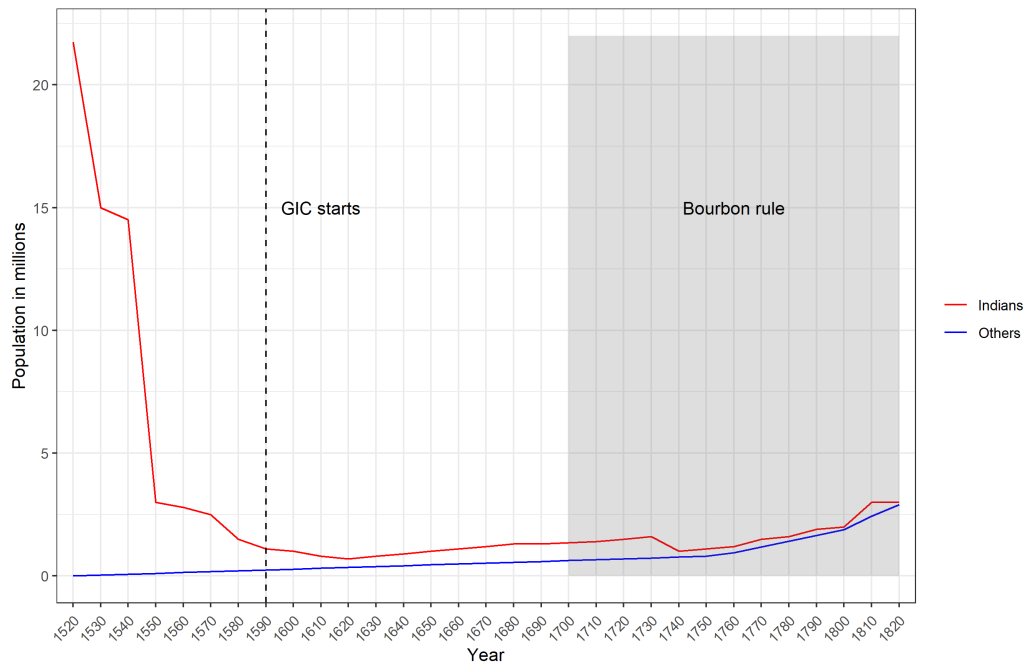
This paper analyses the strategic behavior of the General Indian Court (GIC) over almost 250 years. It should be inaccurate, however, to consider the colonial period as a monolithic regime. The Spanish Empire experienced significant changes influenced by internal conflicts, economic fluctuations, and wars against other European powers. Perhaps the most significant change in the imperial political and economic system was the reform implemented by the Bourbon dynasty in the eighteenth century —after they replaced the Hapsburg royal house in the control of the Spanish Crown. These reforms were aimed to restructuring the bureaucratic apparatus, the military, tax collection, among other government functions (Brading, 1971; Pietschmann, 1991). The reform had significant effects over the entire population, including Indigenous communities, bureaucrats, and elites. The reforms started in the reigns of Philip V (1700-1724, 1724-26), and Ferdinand VI (1746-1759), and were fully embraced during the second half of the 18th century during the reigns of Charles III (1759-1788) and Charles IV (1788-1808).

The Bourbon reforms might have influenced the judicial decision-making process of the GIC through several channels. First, by strengthening the bureaucracy and limiting office selling, local bureaucrats might have become a better mechanism to control local elites, thus reducing the relevance of the GIC. Second, the appropriation of Indian community taxes as a strategy to increase central revenue could have limited the capacity of these communities to finance court visits. Another channel is the ideological shift that reduced the role of the Crown as a conflict mediator which could have diminished trust in the court as a legitimate institution. These changes broke the prior equilibrium in which the Crown was perceived by the indigenous communities as an ally and protector (Borah, 1983). It is also relevant to note that the 18th century also saw a period of general population increase (Figure S1.1). However, this increase does not appear to be associated with the total number of claims submitted to the GIC (Figure S1.2). Following the theoretical framework, the fact that the threat to indigenous population subsistence was less salient also might had reduced the incentives to rule in favor of these claimants.

Although it is clear from Figure 1 in the main text that Bourbon rule is correlated with lower levels of favorable outcomes for the indigenous population in general, it is worthwhile to test the differentiated effect by type of cases. Table S1.1 shows the effect of the claim topics on favorable ruling before and after the 1700 (first two columns). Here, we observe that the general implications of the theoretical framework hold for the pre-reform period. By contrast, in the post-reform period only land related cases present a positive and significant effect on favorable ruling, and only community related cases have a negative and significant effect. These results suggest that, although land claims remained a concern for the Spanish Crown under Bourbon rule, the physical welfare of the Indigenous population became less salient.

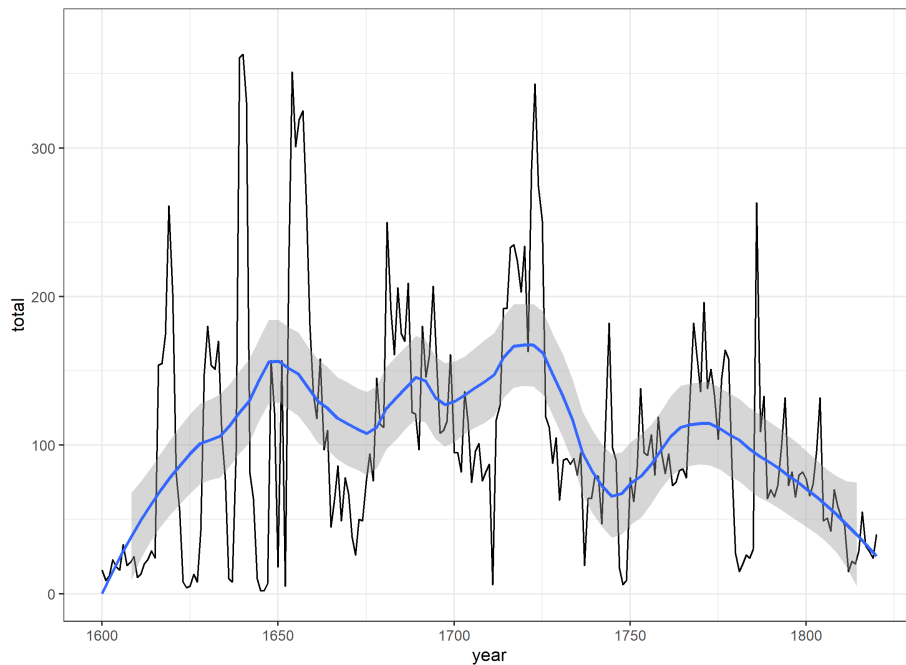
To illustrate how the GIC rulings evolved during the 18th century, Figure S1.3 presents the coefficients

Figure S1.1: The Decline and Recovery of the Native Population



NOTE: Indigenous and non-indigenous population estimated from (Borah, 1983, p.24). The vertical dashed line represents the creation of the GIC, the shaded area represents the period of Bourbon rule.

Figure S1.2: Indigenous Claims in the GIC, 1592-1820



NOTE: Documents stored in the GIC sub-archive, the plot also includes documents from other sub-archives including the words "Indios" or "Naturales".

for different periods by topic starting with the pre-1700 period. Here, we observe that the coefficients converge towards zero. This means that the topics of the case became less and less a determinant for obtaining favorable ruling. Only land related cases maintain a significant coefficient during the first half of the 18th century. These plots can be interpreted as some suggestive evidence that the GIC ceased to be an instrument of strategic administration of justice during Bourbon ruling.

Table S1.1: **Favorable Ruling, Topics, and Vulnerability after Bourbon reform**

	<i>DV: Favorable Ruling</i>					
	Pre-Reform	Post-Reform	Population (Post-Reform)		Local Elites (Post-Reform)	
			Decline	Increase	Strong	Weak
Land Conflicts	0.181*** (0.022)	0.029*** (0.010)	0.053 (0.035)	0.023** (0.011)	0.060** (0.025)	0.032*** (0.010)
Mistreatment	0.056*** (0.019)	-0.007 (0.014)	0.052 (0.068)	-0.018 (0.014)	0.010 (0.031)	-0.020 (0.013)
Taxes	-0.096*** (0.015)	0.015* (0.008)	-0.001 (0.017)	0.017* (0.009)	0.010 (0.016)	0.015* (0.008)
Community	-0.133*** (0.019)	-0.024*** (0.006)	-0.015 (0.020)	-0.025*** (0.005)	-0.002 (0.024)	-0.022*** (0.006)
Province controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Province linear trend	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Units	66	136	134	17	52	187
Observations	6,273	7,802	924	6,330	685	6,505
Adjusted R ²	0.212	0.025	0.033	0.010	-0.004	0.016

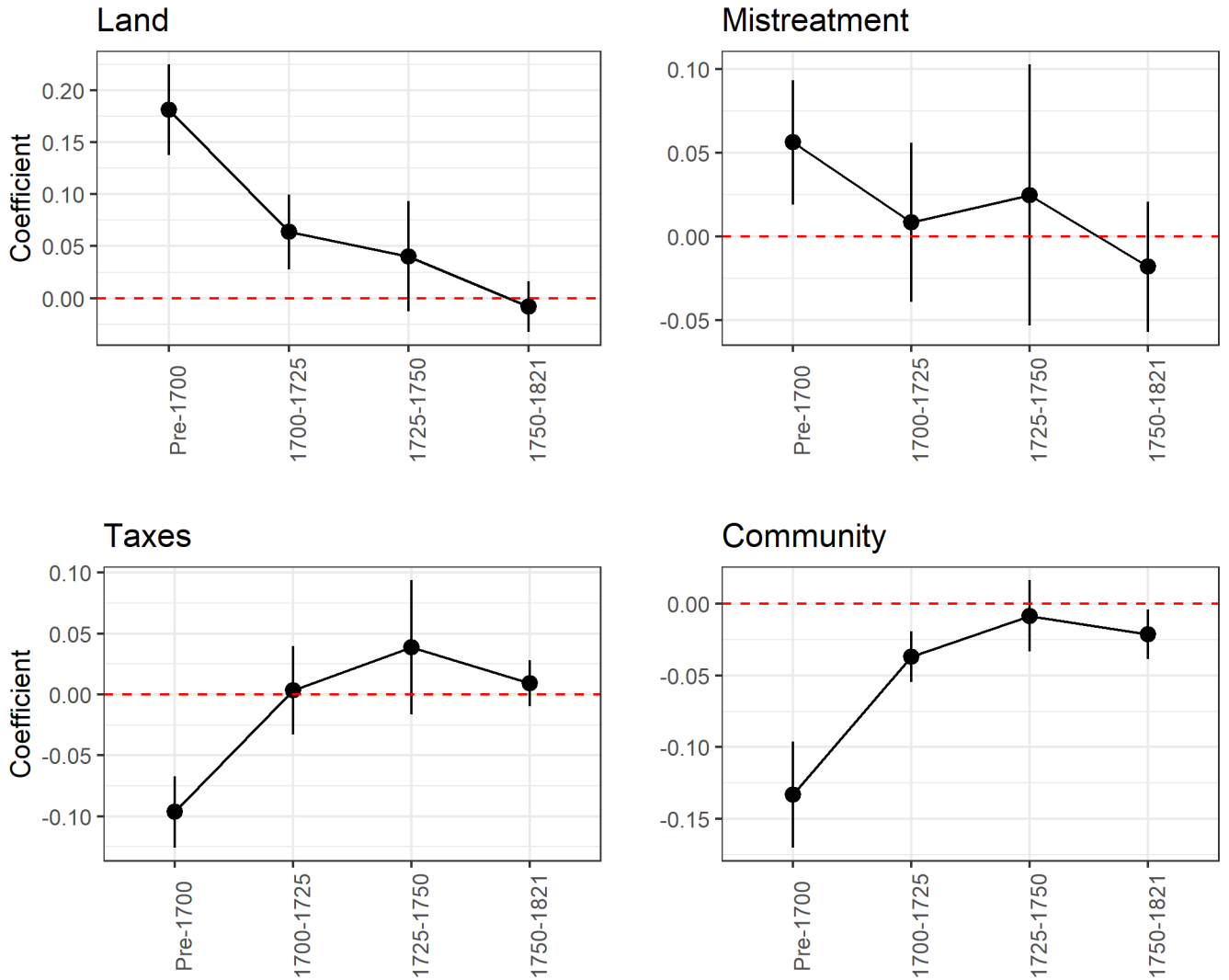
Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable according to the rule based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. All models include time and province controls. Standard errors are clustered by province.

The decision-making process of the court could have also been influenced by internal and external political events. To capture changes in internal politics, I introduce a common control for each Viceroy of New Spain, and each King of Spain. The assumption is that individual policy makers would have an interest to shape Crown strategies. To test the effect of external political events I included an indicator for periods were the Spanish Empire was at war against other European powers. Because external wars created additional pressures over Imperial finances, we might expect that these events had an effect in the strategic behavior of the Crown in terms of judicial making. For example, by loosening their protectionist policies towards the Indigenous population in order to increase revenue. The results for the effect of internal and external political events appear in Table S1.2. These results show that those

Figure S1.3: Convergence Effects Post-1700



Note: Coefficients by topic for the pre-1700 period, and four different periods of the 18th century.

variables have no effect whatsoever on the decision-making process of the court.¹

Table S1.2: **Favorable Ruling and Political Factors**

<i>DV: Favorable Ruling</i>		
	Baseline Model	Internal and External Politics
	(1)	(2)
Land Conflicts	0.113*** (0.018)	0.113*** (0.018)
Mistreatment	0.038*** (0.014)	0.038*** (0.014)
Taxes	-0.029*** (0.009)	-0.029*** (0.009)
Community	-0.061*** (0.010)	-0.061*** (0.010)
Province controls	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y
Province time trend	Y	Y
Viceroy control	N	Y
King control	N	Y
War control	N	Y
Observations	14,080	14,079
Adjusted R ²	0.240	0.240

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable according to the rule based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. All models include time and province controls. Model 2 includes additional controls for viceroy, king, and war periods. Standard errors are clustered by province.

S1.1 State-building effect

An additional concern regarding the political context of the empire is related to the influence of the colonial state at local level. It is possible that the effects we observe on favorable ruling are not related to the strategic behavior of the court, but to bureaucratic improvements at local level. That is, as the Crown increased its presence after the end of the encomienda system, local judges were perhaps less willing to rule against the interests of the Crown. Although this is a plausible hypotheses, the historical evidence suggests that local bureaucrats were not necessarily aligned with the interests of the Crown.

Here, I test the hypothesis that direct rule increased the alignment of interest between the Crown and the local bureaucracy. If this hypothesis is true we would observe a decrease in accusations against

¹The close similarity between the coefficients also suggests that the original model already controls for these additional factors, which are most likely producing multicollinearity in the new model

bureaucrats when the Crown implemented direct control over the province. Using the LBSF dataset I calculate the percentage of claims in which the perpetrator was a local bureaucrat. For the total sample this figure is around 36% of the claims. If we only consider the provinces in which the encomienda had already disappeared the percentage actually increases to 42%. Additionally, if we only take into account the places in which encomiendas never existed the proportion of cases against bureaucrats is 38%. These figures suggest that direct rule did influence the alignment between local bureaucrats and the Crown.

To test differentiated strategic behavior between provinces with and without direct rule, I run the main model comparing provinces that never had an encomienda and places that were subject to this system at any point in time. The results appear in Table S1.3. Here, we observe that, although the coefficients for strategic ruling are smaller for provinces that never experienced the encomienda system, these are still in the expected direction. However, the coefficient for mistreatment is nonsignificant. These results suggest an alignment between local bureaucrats and the Crown under direct rule, and an interest to control local elites and maintain tax revenues similar to the existing under indirect rule.

Table S1.3: **Favorable Ruling, Topics, and Balance of Powers (Direct vs. Indirect Rule)**

	<i>DV: Favorable Ruling</i>	
	Always Direct Rule (Crown)	Indirect Rule (Encomienda)
	(1)	(2)
Land Conflicts	0.113*** (0.020)	0.191*** (0.040)
Mistreatment	0.046 (0.029)	0.071** (0.032)
Taxes	-0.046*** (0.017)	-0.058*** (0.017)
Community	-0.066*** (0.019)	-0.106*** (0.011)
Province controls	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y
Province linear trend	Y	Y
Units	49	48
Observations	3,627	2,153
Adjusted R ²	0.224	0.208

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable ruling according to the classification from the rule-based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. The first column shows the effect of the topic of the claim on favorable ruling using on provinces that never experienced the encomienda system, that is, that were under direct ruling since the beginning of the colonial period. Column 2 shows the effects on places that had an encomienda at any point in time. All models include province and time controls. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

S2 Welfare effects

Did the General Indian Court of colonial Mexico have substantive effects on Indigenous welfare? Here, I test the effects of favorable ruling on changes in indigenous population. This population experienced severe negative shocks in the aftermath of the conquest as a result of epidemics, population misplacement, and exploitation. The judicial system was aimed to contain population decline by protecting indigenous lands and labor. The assumption here is that places receiving more favorable ruling in their claims would have experienced lower population decline and less land extraction. Due to data availability, in this appendix I focus on population changes. To test the effect of favorable ruling in containing population decline I build a panel at province-decade level and compute the following model:

$$y_{p,d} = \mu\%Fav_{p,d} + \theta\%Fav_{p,d-1} + \beta Pop_{p,d} + \gamma_p + \lambda_d + \epsilon_{i,p,t} \quad (1)$$

Where the dependent variable is a binary indicator that takes the value of one if the population of a province p at decade d decreased compared to the previous decade. The coefficient of interest is associated to the percentage of claims receiving favorable ruling in that province (μ). Additionally, I measure the effect of favorable ruling in the previous decade (θ). The model controls for the population of the province in logarithmic terms, as well as for province (γ) and decade (λ) fixed-effects. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

To address the problem of serial autocorrelation I also compute a second model in which both the population and favorable ruling are measured in first-differences:

$$\Delta Pop_{p,d} = \mu\Delta\%Fav_{p,d} + \gamma_p + \lambda_d + \epsilon_{i,p,t} \quad (2)$$

In this case, the dependent variable is the change in indigenous population. The independent variable is the change in the number of claims receiving a favorable ruling, as well as the change in the percentage of claims receiving favorable ruling.

Table S2.1 shows the results of both approaches. Columns 1 to 3 use the binary indicator as a dependent variable. Here, we observe that more claims receiving favorable ruling are also associated with a lower probability of population decline. Past successful claims also have a negative (although smaller) effect on population decline. Columns 4 and 5 show the results using population changes as a dependent variable. Again, the results show a negative correlation between favorable rulings and population change. In other words, places experiencing more claims with a favorable ruling also experienced smaller population changes. These results suggest that judicial protection was particularly relevant for controlling population decline.

Table S2.1: **Favorable Ruling and Population Change**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Population Decline			Δ Population	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
% Favorable Ruling	-0.008 (0.040)		-0.017 (0.037)		
% Favorable Ruling t-1		-0.058* (0.033)	-0.059* (0.034)		
Δ Favorable Ruling				-4.876 (8.247)	
Δ % Favorable Ruling					-445.057* (249.756)
Province FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Time FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Unit specific time trend	N	N	N	N	Y
Units	178	178	178	178	178
Observations	1,632	1,538	1,538	1,631	1,538
Adjusted R ²	0.624	0.689	0.689	0.084	0.218

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

NOTE: The dependent variable for columns 1 to 3 is a binary indicator that takes the value of one if a province experienced population decline from one decade to the next one. The dependent variable for columns 4 and 5 is the first differences in population change across decades. *% Favorable ruling* is the percentage of claims receiving a positive response in a given province-decade. The independent variable in Model 4 is the first difference in the All models control for province and time fixed effects and for a logarithmic transformation of the population. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

S3 The Lesley Byrd Simpson files

Perhaps the first large-scale systematic approach to the study of the General Indian Court was performed by the historian Lesley Byrd Simpson (1891-1984). Simpson visited the General Archives in Mexico between 1930 and 1940 and retrieved hundreds of documents, most of them containing all the stages of the judicial process: from the initial claim, to the final resolution by the Viceroy, including the intermediate remarks made by lawyers and notaries. The copies of these documents are now stored in the Bancroft Library at the University of Berkeley under the label “Documents relating to the Juzgado de Indios, 1580-1820”. These documents seem to be the main source used by Woodrow Borah in his seminal work on the GIC (Borah, 1983). References to these documents also appear in Simpson’s own work *Many Mexicos* published for the first time in 1941.

The Bancroft Library also stores Simpson’s field notes which remain unpublished (henceforth The Lesley Byrd Simpson Files, LBSF).² Among these field-notes there is an extensive analysis of about 2,000 claims presented to the General Indian Court (GIC). For each document, Simpson recorded the exact date in which the claim arrived to court, the town and province in which the claim initiated, the complainant aggravated party, the defendant, and the nature of the complaint. Figure S3.1 shows an example of a field-note page. In total, there are 104 of these pages. The period of the claims in the sample goes from 1589 to 1688, therefore offering a clear representation of the GIC during its initial stages and most of the 17th century.

I worked with a team of research assistants to transcribe these notes into a readable dataset. During this process, each town was linked by name and province to the list of geo-located Indian towns by De Estrada et al. (2005). A second step of the data cleaning process was uniforming the categories. For example, Simpson identifies that “Naturales” appears 600 times as the complainant, whereas “Indios” appears 107 times. Although the geographical and temporal differences in the usage of the term are inherently interesting, for the purposes of this paper I aggregated these categories into one (as both refer to “Indian” claimants). Similarly, for the case of the defendant, categories such as “Justicias” and “Alcalde Mayor” were aggregated into a single one (“Bureaucrats”). Table S3.2 shows the distribution of complainants and defendants in the LBSF. Here, we observe that Indian towns were the most common complainant aggravated party, followed by individual Indians. Indian leaders initiated about 8 percent of these claims. In some cases, claims were raised by other actors, including the local priest and members of the GIC. On the defendant side, the complains were mainly raised against bureaucrats (35.6 percent), followed by local elites (15.3 percent). On the contrary, complains against Indian leaders and the church represent a small percentage of total complains in the sample.

²These files can be found as the “Lesley Byrd Simpson papers, 1931-1984”. I thank Alberto Diaz Cayeros for pointing me to these files.

Figure S3.1: An example of the LBSF

Id. No.	Date of complaint	Place source of complaint	complainant origin and party	Dependent	Nature of Complaint	395
4.124	Nov. 29 1589	Huitzaco, (Quenero)	Indios	el encomendero	Ordenando al Cerej ^o de Iguala haga averigua- cion de unos capitulos q. los indios de huitzaco presentaron en contra de su encomendero	
4.125	Nov. 29 1589	Laxiaco, (Coax)	los nat ^{os}	el alcalde mayor de Teposcalula.	Los nat ^{os} de este puebl ^o al quejarse q. son muy a- mos menudo visitado por el alcalde mayor y por cada gallina q. les encuentra mueren en sus crias, les lleva 2 R ^{os} en plata de multa.	
4.126	Nov. 29 1589	Cocula, (Jalisco)	los nat ^{os}	los AVALOS	Los nat ^{os} de Cocula dicen q. su poblacion ha ve- nido a mucha disminucion, y por lo tanto no pueden acudir a la obra de la Catedral de Guadaluajara; asi mismo piden q. los nat ^{os} de la prov ^o de Awa- to los acudan a todo servi ^o .	
4.127	Nov. 29 1589	Cuitzeo, (Mich.)	los nat ^{os}	justicias	Se les manda a las justicias de la prov ^o de michoacan q. una vez q. los indios de Cuitzeo hayan pagado sus tributos, no los obliguen a q. paguen por segunda vez.	
4.128	Nov. 29 1589	Chapulco, (Pueb ^o)	un principal	alcalde mayor	Siendo las tierras q. Hernando castillo, prin- cipal, reclama, de su propiedad, se le mon- da al alcalde mayor de Tehuacan lo ampare.	
4.129	Nov. 29 1589	Huitzaco, (Quenero)	los nat ^{os}	el beneficiado.	Orden a Hernán Minoz de Obregon, derigo be- neficiado no pida indios de servi ^o ni otros bastimentos sin pagar por ellos.	
4.130	Nov. 29 1589	Tequipilpan, (Hgo.)	los mineros	de Poalunca	Orden a los obligados de las minas de Poalunca, no hagan perjuicios a los indios en sus estan- cias ni les ocupen sus corrales para encerrar sus ganados.	
4.131					Repeticion del exp. num. 129.	
4.132					Por otro no más se le mandaron en el caso	

Table S3.2: Complainants and Defendants in LBSF

Complainant			Defendant		
Category	#	%	Category	#	%
Indian town	926	48.9	Bureaucrats	674	35.6
Individual Indian	219	11.6	Local Elites	289	15.27
Indian Leaders	146	7.7	Indian Leaders	81	4.3
Other	19	10	Church	67	3.5
NA	583	30.8	NA	782	41.3
TOTAL	1,893	100	TOTAL	1,893	100

Table S3.3: **Provinces with Large Number Claims**

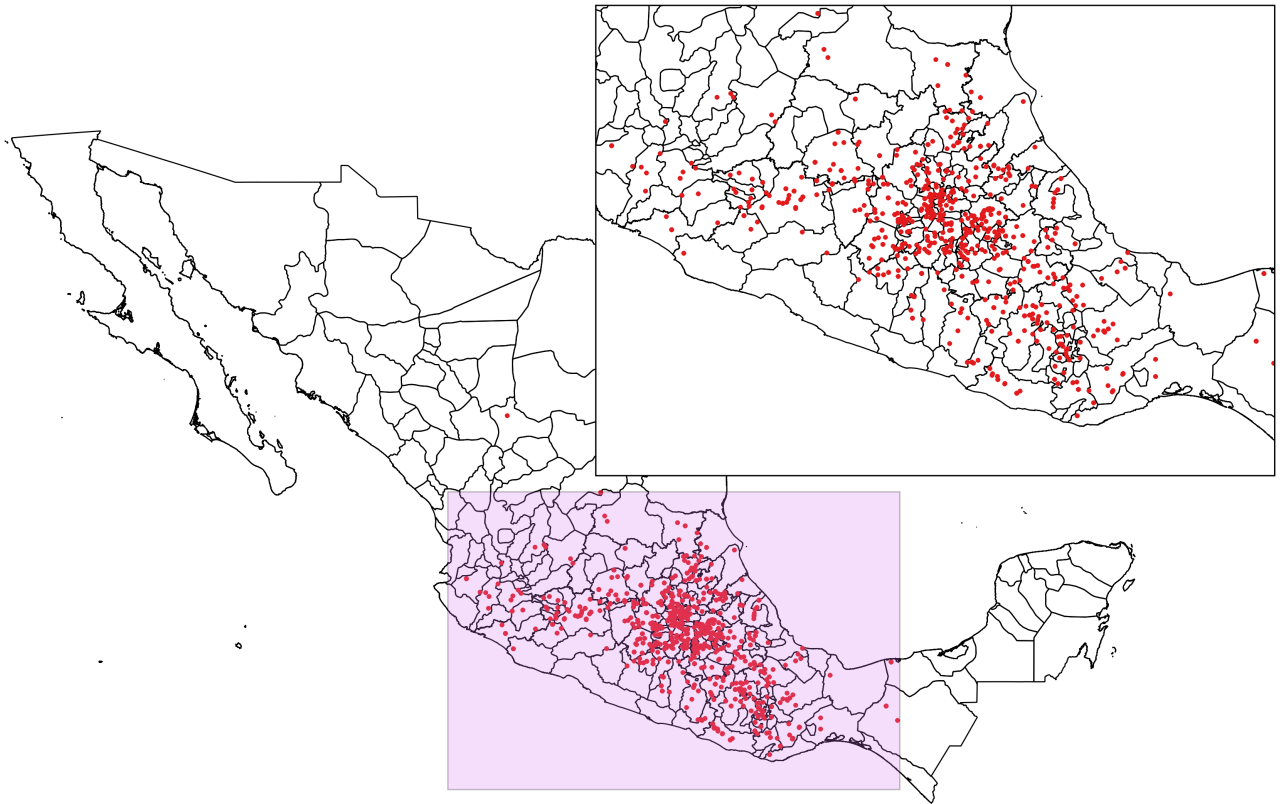
Province	Number of Claims
Tlaxcala	60
Tepeaca	56
Cuernavaca	52
Teposcolula	42
Cholula	36
Chalco	35
Metepec	33
Metztitlan	32
Tecali	28

An additional step in the construction of this dataset consisted in applying the rule-based method to identify topics and favorable ruling. Here, I used the key-words and terms presented in the the main text. Around 15% of the claims in this sample are related to land conflicts, 18% to mistreatment, 12% to taxes, and 5% to community issues. Also, I identify that 8% of the cases are associated with a favorable outcome for Indigenous claimants using the rule-based method.

Because Simpson identified the specific location of the claims, it is possible to geocode them. Figure S3.2 shows the exact location of the claims. Here, we observe that most of the claims come from central Mexico. This pattern corresponds generally with the universe of claims. Table S3.3 shows the provinces with the largest number of claims in the sample. The case of Tlaxcala is interesting because this province enjoyed several privileges in the aftermath of the conquest as a result of a military alliance with the Spaniards (Gibson, 1967). The large number of claims initiated in this province might be an indicator of their closer interaction with Imperial powers, and the strength of their Indian government.

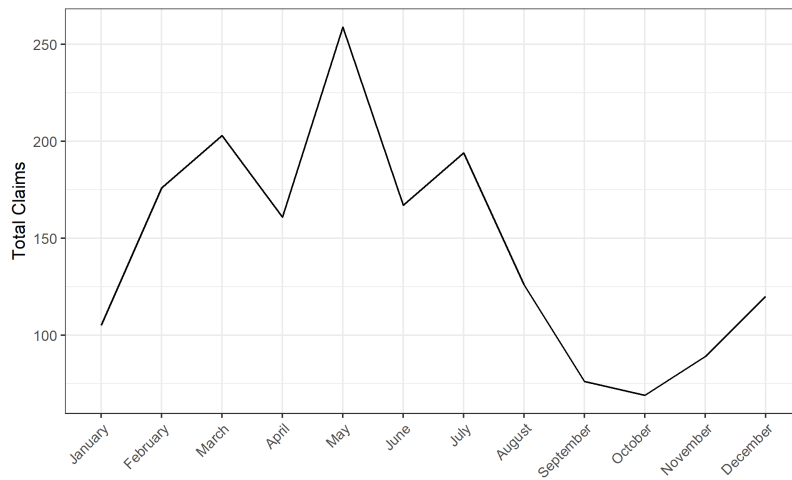
Because this data also includes the exact date of the claim it is possible to explore other temporal patterns. Figure S3.3 shows the number of claims by month. Here, we observe that most of the claims occurred between May and July, with a significant decline in the fall months. This trend is consistent with the temporarily of the maize harvesting season, the main crop cultivated by Indian communities (Florescano, 1986). Because these communities were heavily dependent on this crop the opportunity cost of traveling to Mexico City might increased during this season.

Figure S3.2: Geolocated Claims of the LBSF



NOTE: Each red dot corresponds to a locality where a claim was originated. The map also shows the provinces according to Gerhard (1972).

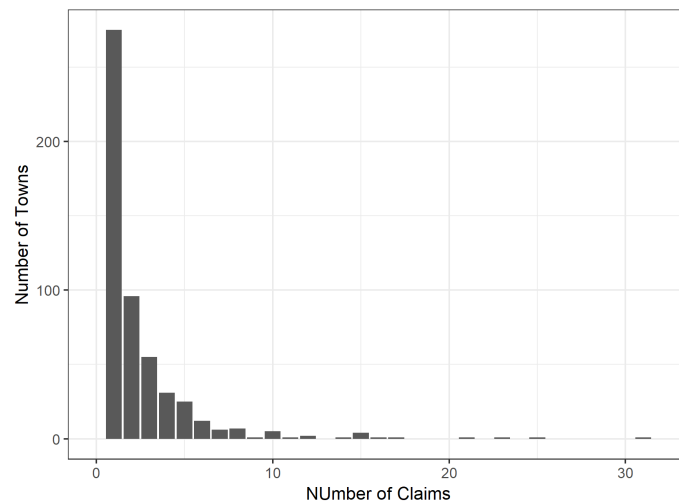
Figure S3.3: Monthly Trend of Claims (1589-1688)



NOTE: Total claims by month in the LBSF.

Another interesting pattern in this data is the intensity of contention. That is, how often towns resorted to court. Figure S3.4 shows the distribution of the number of times a town appears in this dataset. In total, there are 527 localities referred in these claims. Out of those, 51 percent only appear once and about 20 percent appear two times. However, there are a number of localities which seems to present a high intensity in the use of courts: around 13 percent raised more than five claims during this period.

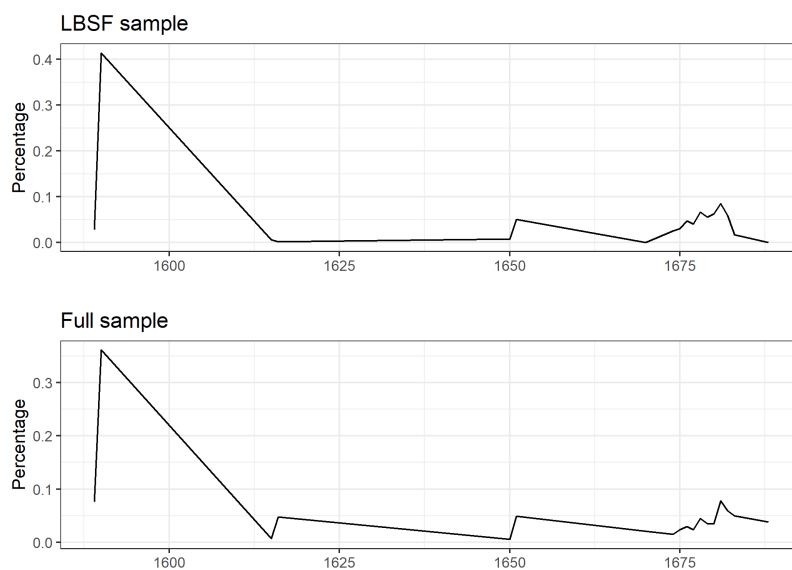
Figure S3.4: Distribution of the number of claims by individual town (1589-1688)



NOTE: The histogram shows the intensity of court usage in the sample by towns.

Although it is not possible to have a full understanding of Simpson’s sampling process *a posteriori*, a comparison with the entire dataset can provide some idea of the bias of this sample (if any). A first exercise to compare these datasets is to identify if there is a difference in the temporal distribution. Figure S3.5 compares graphically the distribution of the LBSF with the universe of cases for the years included in the LBSF. Here, we observe that the highest percentage of cases by year for the both datasets occurs in 1590. For the LBSF, 41% of the cases (766 files) correspond to that year, whereas for the entire dataset this proportion is 36% (1,162 files). This figure suggests that the LBSF follows the same temporal pattern than the entire dataset. A Wilcoxon Rank Sum test corroborates that there is no significant differences across these two samples (pvalue=0.8124).

Figure S3.5: Comparison Between LBSF Sample and Full Sample by Year



NOTE: The plots show the percentage of cases per year in each sample.

Another way to identify the biases in the LBSF sample is by comparing the proportion of cases by type of complain. Table S3.4 shows that the proportion of land and tax related cases is similar across samples. However, the LBSF seem to be over-estimating mistreatment related cases in this period, while underestimating community related cases. The proportion of cases that received protection is also lower in the LBSF. These differences should be taken into account as a limitation for this analysis.

S3.1 Differentiating between perpetrators

The LBSF also allows to test the hypothesis that actors had different goals and incentives. Based on historic literature and the qualitative analysis of specific cases, in this paper I argued that local elites

Table S3.4: **Proportion of Cases by Type in the LBSF Sample and the Full Sample**

	LBSF sample	Full sample
Land	0.16	0.12
Mistreatment	0.18	0.07
Taxes	0.13	0.12
Community	0.05	0.11
Protection	0.08	0.13

were more likely to be involved in land invasions and overexploitation of the Indian force. Local elites were purposely excluded from government positions and their main way to obtain economic wealth was through expansion of agricultural estates or through access to government monopolies, such as the mining industry. On the other hand, bureaucrats obtained benefits through rent extraction and corruption.

Church members had close interaction with Indian communities and often were the only Europeans with access to these towns. Mendicant orders were involved in land invasions and individual priests and often overexploited Indians, these actors also had strong incentives to control the local population. Most Indian towns housed a priest which became the most proximate and influential civil authority. For this reason we should expect that parish priest and religious orders had strong incentives to influence local politics.

The fourth actor, the Indian leaders, were crucial mediators between the Spanish and Indian worlds. Indian *caciques* governed as officials and judges, usually ruling by local customs (Coatsworth and Tortella Casares, 2002). In many occasions, these actors remained unchecked and also had strong incentives to accumulate and perpetuate their power. Because Indian lands were communal in nature it is unlikely that they were involved in land related claims. However, there is some evidence that these actors used their power to exploit the local population.

To explore the differences across actors, in Table S3.5 I show the distribution of claims by topic for local elites, bureaucrats, Church members, and Indian leaders. This table shows that, for the claims that can be associated to a topic, local elites were mainly accused of land invasions and physical mistreatment. On the other hand, bureaucrats' related claims were mainly related to physical mistreatment. Claims related to taxation are also prevalent for bureaucrats, followed by land related issues. Table S3.5 also shows that, for Church members, most of the claims were related to mistreatment, followed by community related issues. Finally, the last column shows that Indian leaders were mainly involved in physical mistreatment.

To formally test the differences across actors, I run a regression in which the topic becomes the independent variable and the actors are the explanatory variables. The results appear in table S3.6. Local elites is the category of reference. Here, we observe that local elites are more likely to be associated with land related claims than bureaucrats and Church members. The results also show that bureaucrats

are less likely to be involved than local elites in mistreatment cases, whereas Church members and Indian leaders are not significantly different.

The third column of table S3.6 shows that bureaucrats are more likely to be associated with tax related claims. Finally, we observe that Church members are the most likely actor to be involved in community related cases.

Overall, these results align with the historical insights about how these actors exploited Indian communities. The results of the bureaucratic behavior are particularly interesting because they show how their relationships with the Indigenous populations was less direct. In general, there is no evidence that they were involved in claims related to land or mistreatment at a higher degree than local elites. However, they seemed to be abusing their power by the misappropriation of taxes. Finally, these results also show that Church members had a higher involvement in community related claims.

Table S3.5: **Distribution of Cases by Actors/Perpetrators**

	LE	Bureaucrats	Church members	Indian elites
Land	27.68	13.35	11.94	16.05
Mistreatment	29.41	20.77	29.85	41.98
Taxes	9.00	13.80	4.48	16.05
Community	2.42	4.45	14.93	4.94
Other/NA	31.49	47.63	38.81	20.99
Total	100	100	100	100

Table S3.6: **Perpetrators and Topics of Claims**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Land	Mistreatment	Taxes	Community
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Bureaucrats	-0.154*** (0.036)	-0.071** (0.036)	0.043** (0.020)	0.017 (0.013)
Churchmen	-0.187*** (0.054)	0.001 (0.076)	-0.032 (0.040)	0.153*** (0.055)
Indian elites	-0.102 (0.066)	0.055 (0.078)	0.042 (0.046)	0.020 (0.031)
Observations	852	852	852	852
Adjusted R ²	0.029	0.006	0.002	0.019

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

NOTE: Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for each topic. The explanatory variables are the different actors. Local elites is the category of reference.

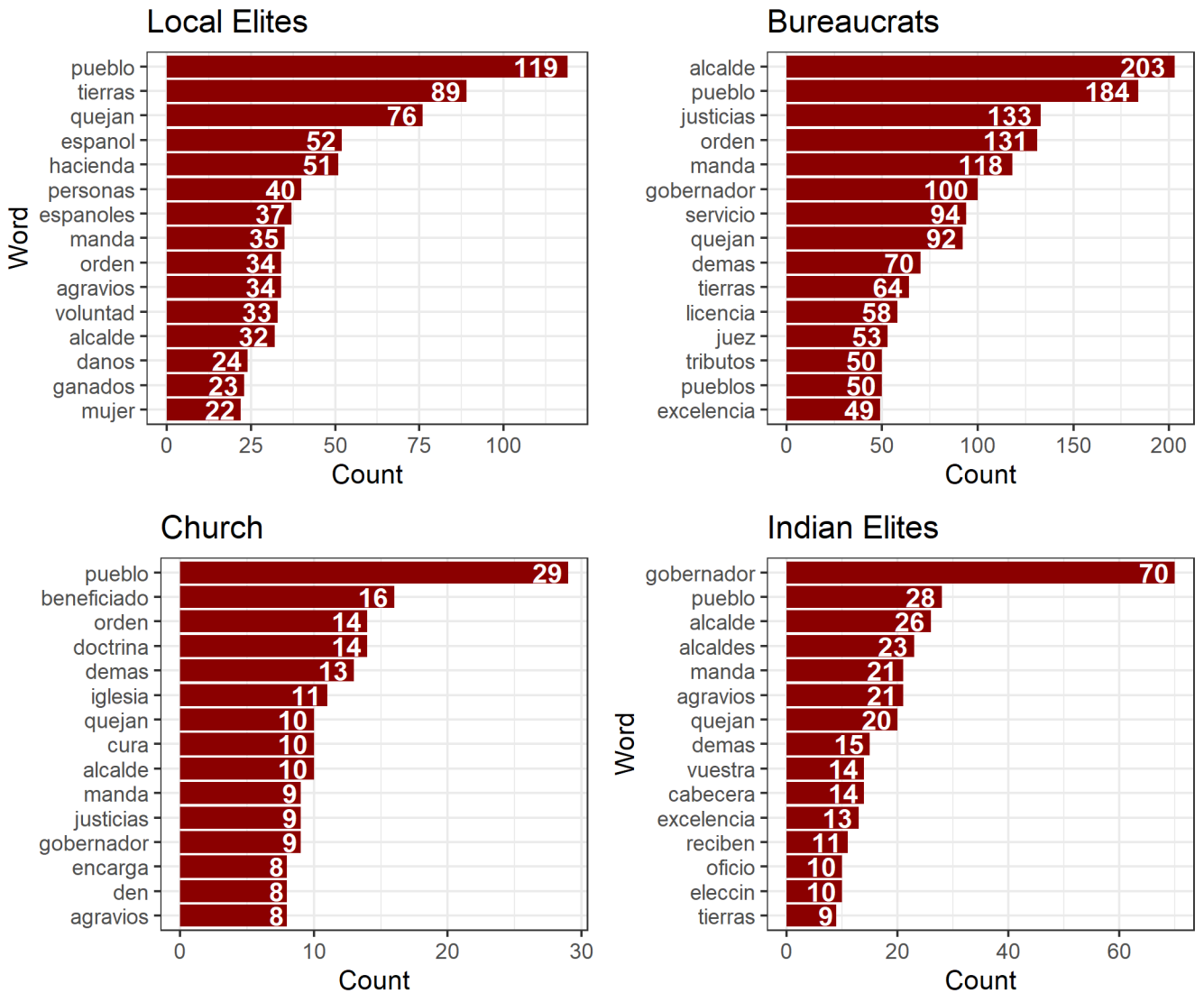
A different approach to explore the involvement of each these actors in Indian claims is by analyzing the texts of the claims. Here, I identify the most common words for each defendant. In this analysis,

I first preprocessed the text of each claim to extract stop words and words that are very likely to be present in all claims such as “indios” (indians) or “naturales” (natives). Figure S3.6 shows the most frequent words for each category. Here we observe that the most common words for claims related to local elites are “pueblo” (town), and “tierras” (lands), once again reinforcing the expectation that these actors will be interested in encroaching Indian lands.

The most common words related to claims against bureaucrats are related to the different titles at local level, such as “alcalde” (mayor), “justicias” (judges), and “gobernador” (governor). Other word that appears at high frequency is “servicios” (services) suggesting that complaints related to physical mistreatment were about the misuse of Indian personal services. Here, it is interesting that the word “tierras” is relevant but relatively less salient than for local elites.

Figure S3.6 also shows that the most common word is “pueblo” (community) for claims against Church members, suggesting their involvement in local politics. For Indian leaders the most common word is “gobernador” (governor), referring to the title that Indian caciques held within communities. Other prevalent word is “agravios” (grievances) which is also related to physical abuses but with a different, perhaps harsher, connotation.

Figure S3.6: Most Frequent Words in Claims Against Different Perpetrators



NOTE: Top 15 words for each actor. Some common words with high prevalence across all topics are ignored.

S4 Human coding

S4.1 Workshop and coding rules

A team of research assistants read the summaries of the documents and for each observation classified: 1) The author of the document (royal authorities, local authorities, Indian villages, etc.), 2) The direction of the document according to the sender and the recipient (top-down, down-top, or horizontal), 3) The topic of the document (according to 23 pre-determined topics), 4) If the text documented a clear interaction between Indians and non-Indians, 5) If the general interaction of the text was negative for the Indians, and 6) If the text expressed a clear resolution and, if this is the case, the outcome of the resolution (positive, negative or ambiguous).³ Each unit of text was classified by three different coders

The coding workshop for the random sample of 3,000 documents took place in a Mexico City university during February and March 2018. During the workshop, a team of 11 undergrads received instructions on how to evaluate each individual document. All undergrads were Spanish native speakers majoring in social sciences. Each coder classified 600 documents and each document was classified by three different coders. The goal of this classification is to capture nuances that are difficult to detect through automated methods. The classification was divided into the following control variables, for all texts, and flow variables, which follow a sequential process. These are:

- **Control variables.**- The following variables define the general characteristics of the text.
 - **Producer.**- Who produces the document?
 1. Colonial authority (1): Vicerroy, Audiencia, Consejo de Indias, Juzgado General de Indios (GIC).
 2. Spanish Authority (2): Corregidor, Alcalde Mayor, Governor.
 3. Indian Authority (3): Cacique, Cabildo, Indian Governor.
 4. Notary (4)
 5. Indigenous Village (4)
 6. Indigenous individual (5)
 7. Spaniard (7): Hacienda owner, Spanish citizen, hidalgo.
 8. Other (8)
 9. NA (99)
 - **Hierarchy.**- What is the direction of the communication?

³Human coders identified that around 25 percent of the claims resulted in a positive resolution for the Indians, compared to 13 percent when using the dictionary method.

1. Bottom-up (1): When an authority makes requests to a higher level authority, or when an Indian village/individual makes a claim.
2. Top-down (2): When a higher level authority gives a resolution.
3. Horizontal (3): Communication between authorities of the same level.
4. NA

– **Topic.-** What are the topics of this document? (More than one option is allowed)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Government (1) | 14. Amparo (14) |
| 2. Forced labor (2) | 15. Commerce (15) |
| 3. Urbanism (3) | 16. Payments (16) |
| 4. Church (4) | 17. Imprisonment (17) |
| 5. Physical abuses (5) | 18. Agriculture (18) |
| 6. Health (6) | 19. Loans (19) |
| 7. Taxes (7) | 20. Debts (20) |
| 8. Expulsion (8) | 21. Cattle (21) |
| 9. Justice (9) | 22. Census (22) |
| 10. Lands (10) | 23. Elections (23) |
| 11. Civil conflict (11) | 24. Other (24) |
| 12. Riots (12) | 25. NA (99) |
| 13. Wills (13) | |

- **Flow variables.-** The following variables are sequential. That is, each depend on the previous answer.

– **Conflict or Interaction.-** Does the document refers to a conflict or a situation in which Indians and non-Indians interact, either as group or as individuals?

1. Yes (1): If there is any kind of interaction *continue to the next question.*
2. No (2): There is no interaction or conflict, the document is about a different topic (is misclassified). *End the classification.*
3. NS (99): *End the classification.*

– **Negative for the Indians.-** Is the topic of the interaction generally negative for the Indians as an ethic group?

1. Yes (1): The document refers to an abuse against the Indians. *Continue to the next question.*
 2. No (2): The document refers to a situation that was positive for the Indians. *Continue to the next question.*
 3. Ambiguous (3): The situation could be positive or negative. *Continue to the next question.*
- **Resolution.**- Did the conflict had a resolution from the General Indian Court?
1. Positive for the Indians: Indians receive protection (e.g. land is returned to them, are protected from forced labor, get tax reductions, etc.)
 2. Negative: Land is extracted from Indians, they are forced to work, taxes are raised, etc.
 3. Ambiguous

Additionally, the coders wrote additional notes for those cases which were hard to classify.

S4.2 Intra-coder reliability measures

To assess the quality of the manual classification I measure Inter-Coder Reliability (ICR) by calculating the Fleiss Kappa (κ) measure. This measure is a generalization of Scott's π statistics and is designed to calculate ICR for multiple coders and accounts for chance agreements by using the assumption of equal marginal proportion of the coders (Lombard et al., 2002). This statistical measure ranges from 0 to 1. Although there is no an universal rule for interpreting the values, Landis and Koch (1977) provide the following ranges: ≤ 0 : Poor agreement; 0.01-0.20: Slight Agreement; 0.21-0.40: Fair Agreement; 0.41-0.60: Moderate Agreement; 0.61-0.80: Substantial Agreement; 0.81-1.00: Almost Perfect Agreement.

Table S4.1 shows the Fleiss Kappas for all the classified variables. The average Kappa is 0.31, which is considered a fair agreement among coders. However, some of the most relevant variables for this analysis reach much higher reliability levels. For example, land conflicts has a kappa of 0.6.

Table S4.1: Fleiss Kappa κ

Producer								
<i>Viceroyal Authority</i>	<i>Local Spanish Authority</i>	<i>Local Indian Authority</i>	<i>Notary</i>	<i>Indian Town</i>	<i>Indian Individual</i>	<i>Spaniard</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NA</i>
0.4594	0.0240	0.0111	0.1123	0.3602	0.2974	0.1380	0.0969	0.1830
Hierarchy								
<i>Ascendant</i>	<i>Descendant</i>	<i>Horizontal</i>	<i>NA</i>					
0.2747	0.3707	0.1756	0.0870					
Topic								
<i>Government</i>	<i>Forced labor</i>	<i>Urbanism</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Physical Abuses</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Taxation</i>	<i>Expulsion</i>	<i>Justice</i>
0.4034	0.3817	0.4705	0.3010	0.5680	0.2320	0.5105	0.7127	0.3130
Topic (cont.)								
<i>Lands</i>	<i>Civil Suit</i>	<i>Riots</i>	<i>Wills</i>	<i>Amparo</i>	<i>Commerce</i>	<i>Payments</i>	<i>Prison</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>
0.6032	0.2626	0.5986	0.1510	0.3685	0.1813	-0.0014	0.4592	0.3627
Topic (cont.)								
<i>Loan</i>	<i>Debt</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Census</i>	<i>Local Electios</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NA</i>		
0.4504	0.3643	0.6236	0.4810	0.1872	0.2766	0.0967		
Outcomes								
<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Negative situation for the Indians</i>	<i>Resolution</i>						
0.3344	0.3008	0.3226						

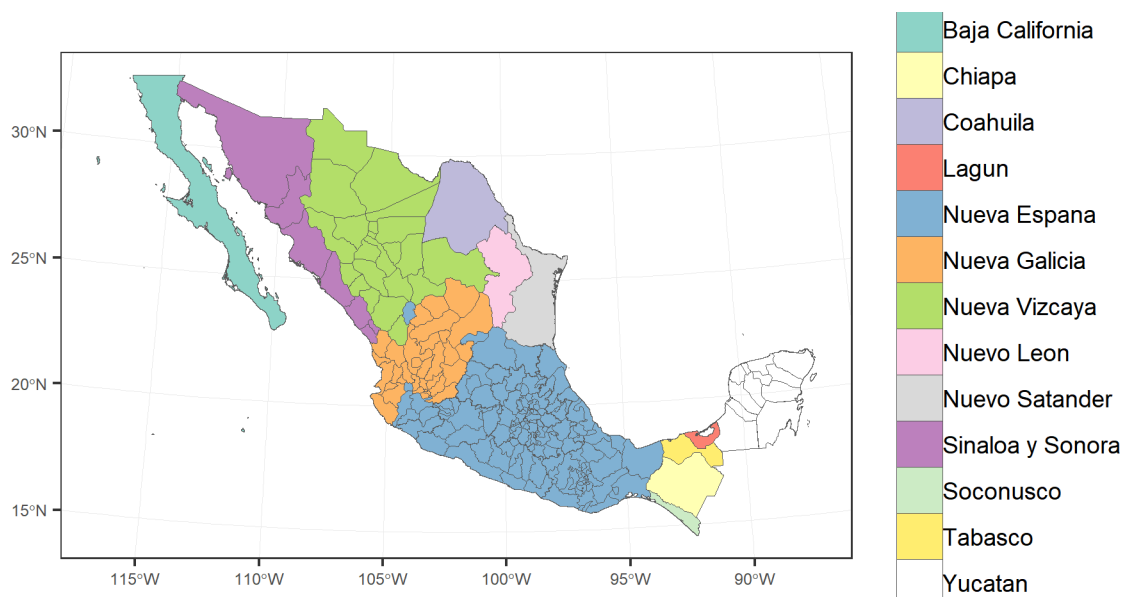
S5 Geographic variation

This section assesses the differentiated geographic effects of the GIC. As demonstrated in the analysis of the first-stage bias in Appendix A2 in the main text, the distance between the Indigenous communities and Mexico City did matter. Places located further away from the capital of the viceroyalty presented less claims. The political economy literature argues that state capacity diminishes as the distance to the center of power increases. Therefore, we should expect that the probabilistic model describing the strategic behavior might be more applicable to the central provinces of colonial Mexico.

Although boundaries and jurisdictions in colonial Mexico were constantly changing and —usually— poorly defined, colonial maps and censuses can be used to understand the geography of the Empire. In this paper I use the provinces defined by Gerhard (1972) in his three volume encyclopedia *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*. This political divisions replicate the jurisdictions by the end of the colonial period (1786) after the Bourbon reforms. However, a large proportion of the documents used in this paper can be linked to a territory by name.

Figure S5.1 shows these provinces and their regional division. In total there are 212 provinces and 13 regions.⁴ Each of these regions had its own governor (or captain) who was subordinated to the Viceroy and the Audiencia. Although the entire viceroyalty of New Spain also covered parts of Central America and the southern region of modern United States, for the purposes of this paper I do not consider these regions because the GIC had no jurisdiction over them.

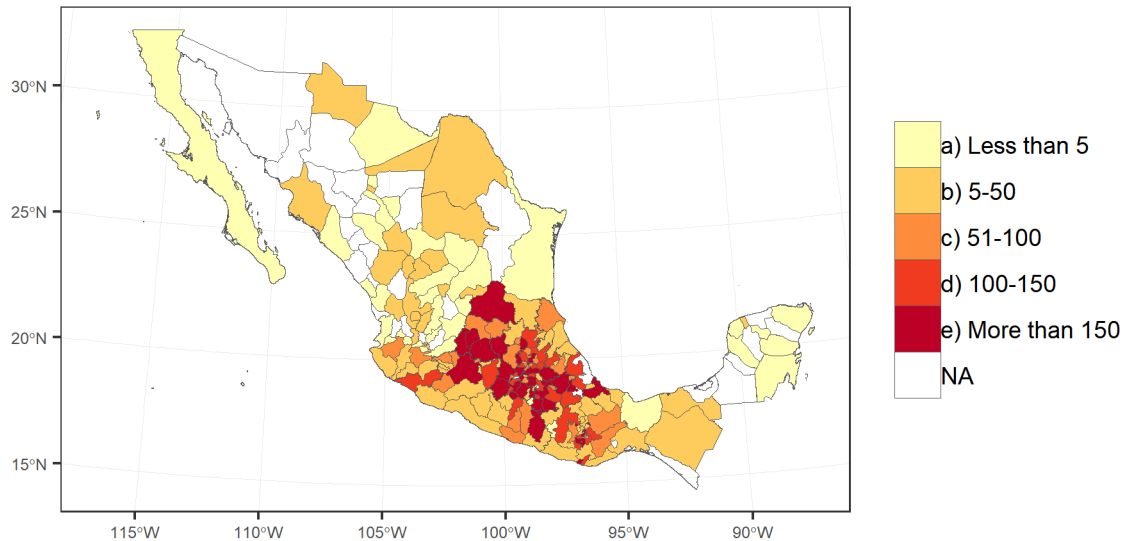
Figure S5.1: Provinces and Regions of Colonial Mexico



⁴The kingdoms of New Spain (separate from the viceroyalty of New Spain itself), Nueva Galicia, Nueva Vizcaya, Nuevo Reino de Leon, Nuevo Santander; the *capitania* of Yucatan, Coahuila, Sonora and Sinaloa, and California; and the provinces of Tabasco, Lagun, Chiapa, and Soconusco

To provide a visual representation of the geographic variation of claims in figure S5.2 I map the total claims by colonial province for the entire existence of the GIC (1592 to 1820). Here, we observe that most of the claims came from the central provinces corresponding to the kingdom of New Spain. Because many of the claims are labeled as being originated in Mexico City, even if these were initiated in other provinces, this province is overrepresented.

Figure S5.2: **Indigenous Claims by Province**



As observed in the previous maps, the reach of the court was concentrated in the central provinces of Mexico, that is, the New Spain kingdom. To isolate the reach of the court over this region I subset the provinces and test the topic's effect on favorable ruling. Table S5.1 confirms that the main implications for the probabilistic model developed in the paper apply for these central provinces.

What can we say then about areas outside the New Spain kingdom? In Table S5.2 I test the effects of topics of claims on favorable ruling for the provinces of the Northern frontier (Nueva Vizcaya, Nueva Galicia, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Sonora and Sinaloa, and California). For these provinces the colonial archives only stores 369 claims. The main reason for this limited sample is that Indian claims were managed by the Guadalajara Audiencia (Borah, 1983). It is likely that many claims from this region are still stored in the local archives. Moreover, the number of Indians in this region was very small compared with New Spain. The results shows that using this limited sample mistreatment cases have a higher likelihood of receiving favorable ruling, however these results are non-significant. Testing for differentiated population levels is not possible due to sample size limitations. Additionally, as these provinces did not experienced the encomienda system it is not possible to use this proxy for the strength of local elites.

Table S5.1: **Favorable Ruling, Topics, and Balance of Power (Central Provinces)**

<i>DV: Favorable Ruling</i>							
	All	Population		Local Elites		Population Decline &	
		Decline	Increase	Strong	Weak	LE strong	LE weak
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Land Conflicts	0.121*** (0.018)	0.250*** (0.027)	0.055*** (0.010)	0.190*** (0.032)	0.078*** (0.012)	0.260*** (0.055)	0.202*** (0.037)
Mistreatment	0.044*** (0.015)	0.080*** (0.025)	0.005 (0.014)	0.045 (0.033)	0.030 (0.020)	0.063 (0.063)	0.093** (0.041)
Taxes	-0.029*** (0.009)	-0.045*** (0.015)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.047** (0.022)	-0.018* (0.010)	-0.066* (0.038)	-0.033 (0.023)
Community	-0.063*** (0.009)	-0.081*** (0.022)	-0.059*** (0.010)	-0.078** (0.032)	-0.054*** (0.009)	-0.047 (0.065)	-0.086*** (0.031)
Province FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Units	122	111	117	68	107	65	72
Observations	13,598	3,883	8,811	2,597	9,146	1,000	1,913
Adjusted R ²	0.227	0.283	0.118	0.233	0.209	0.261	0.302

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

NOTE: Linear regressions using the 128 provinces of the New Spain kingdom. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable ruling according to the classification from the rule-based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. The first column shows the effect of the topic of the claim on favorable ruling using the entire sample. Columns 2 and 3 test the effect of population vulnerability. A province is considered under population decline if the Indigenous population is smaller than the previous decade. Columns 4 and 5 show the effect of elite power. Provinces with strong local elites are those in which population under encomienda is higher than the period average. Finally, columns 6 and 7 show the effect of claims topics after conditioning on population decline and different levels of elite strength. All models include province and time fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

Similarly, for the Yucatan region there are only 42 claims, thus limiting our interpretation for the role of the GIC in this region. Due to geographic distance this region had relatively autonomy and, similarly to provinces in the northern frontier, Indian claims were mainly managed at local level. Borah (1983) notes that Yucatan had a parallel judicial system with similar funding characteristics than in central Mexico, in which Indians paid a tax to support the functioning of the court.⁵

Table S5.2: **Favorable Ruling, Topics, and Balance of Powers (Northern Frontier)**

<i>DV: Favorable Ruling</i>	
	All
Land Conflicts	0.008 (0.090)
Mistreatment	0.194 (0.119)
Taxes	-0.027 (0.090)
Community	0.050 (0.051)
Province FE	Y
Time FE	Y
Units	99
Observations	324
Adjusted R ²	0.107

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

NOTE: Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable ruling according to the classification from the rule-based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. All models include province and time fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

⁵For an account of the legal system of this region see Cunill (2012).

S6 Indigenous uprisings and claims

In this paper I argue that the opportunity to address grievances through the judicial system offered an institutional substitute for violent collective action. To provide empirical evidence of this claim I analyze the correlation between favorable ruling and indigenous uprisings. I define indigenous uprisings in two ways:

- **Large scale rebellions:** Refer to those rebellions that had been recorded by historians and can be found in secondary sources, usually involving more than one village, and even entire provinces or ethnic groups. Most of these events occurred during the 16th century with a minor spike during the 18th century. An example of one of these rebellions is the Tepehuan rebellion of 1616 which has been documented by Gerhard (1972), Taylor (1979) and Galaviz de Capdevielle et al. (1967).
- **Riots, Revolts, and Mutinies:** These "small-scale events" are all associated to Indian village collective action events. In general, these rarely involved more than one village and often lasted less than a year. The large majority of these events have not been recored by historians, at least in a systematic way. The most complete dataset on these types of colonial uprisings was created by Taylor (1979), who studied 137 rural uprisings between 1700 and 1819. The main caveat of Taylor's dataset is that his analysis is limited to a sample of the entire archive. Moreover, it is unclear what his selection criteria was. To circumvent this restriction, I performed a comprehensive search over the entire AGN catalog and identified mentions of rebellion, revolts, and uprisings using key terms. Table S6.1 shows the key terms used for this search. I then validate each of the identified documents manually and discarded misclassified ones. With this approach I classified almost 300 previously unidentified Indian riots and uprisings. To the best of my knowledge ,this is the most complete dataset on Indigenous uprisings for colonial Mexico.

Table S6.1: **Key Terms Related to Violent Collective Action**

Key Terms
Rebelión (Rebellion), Tumulto (Riot), Alzamiento (Uprising), Levantamiento (Uprising), Sublevación (Uprising, mutiny), Insurrección (Insurrection)

Using this novel dataset, I created a panel at province-decade level. I then test the effect of past favorable ruling on Indigenous uprisings by running the following linear model:

$$y_{i,d} = \gamma Protect_{i,d} + \alpha Claims_{i,d} + \lambda Pop_{i,d} + \theta_i + f(t) + \epsilon_{i,d} \quad (3)$$

The dependent variable is the number of violent collective action events in a province i at decade

d. For comparison purposes, I run the model on the two types of collective action: 1) large scale rebellions and 2) revolts and uprisings. Here, the coefficient of interest is γ , referring to the number of cases receiving protection in a given province. Because one would expect that the intensity of the use of the judicial system would impact the levels of protection (i.e. a province with more claims might have higher likelihood of receiving protection), I control for the number of claims. *Pop* is a logarithmic transformation of the province population. Again, θ_i represent province fixed effects. The model also controls for a function of time. To account for intra-province correlation, standard errors clustered at province level. Additionally, as an alternative transformation for the dependent variable I measure favorable ruling in terms the *percentage* of claims that were successful.

Table S6.2 shows the results of Model 3. These results strongly suggest that places with more claims receiving favorable ruling were less likely to present violent collective action in the form of riots or low scale revolts. By contrast, favorable ruling does not seem to be correlated with large scale rebellions, suggesting that these types of collective action followed different patterns. Columns 3 and 4 show the results using the percentage of successful claims as independent variable. Again, there is a significant and negative correlation between favorable ruling and small-scale violent collective action. Overall, the results support the argument of a substitution effect between institutional contestation and certain types of violent resistance.

Table S6.2: Uprisings and Successful Claims

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Rebellions (1)	Riots, Revolts, etc. (2)	Rebellions (3)	Riots, Revolts, etc. (4)
Successful Claims (tot.)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.007*** (0.002)		
% Successful Claims			0.011 (0.014)	-0.108* (0.061)
Province FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	1,788	1,788	1,788	1,788
Adjusted R ²	0.195	0.114	0.195	0.111

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The dependent variable for columns 1 and 2 is the number of violent collective action events in a province-decade excluding Mexico City. The dependent variable for columns 3 and 4 is the percentage of successful claims. All models control by a logarithmic transformation of the population, and time and province fixed effects. Additionally, models 1 and 2 control for total number of claims. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

S6.1 Do protest cause claims?

The results presented above show a negative and significant relationship between the percentage of successful claims and small-scale collective action events. However, it is also plausible to argue the inverse relationship between these two variables. That is, the threat of rebellion could increase the likelihood of successful claims. To test for this causal relationship, I run a standard bivariate Granger test. This test is designed to test “causality”, defined as precedence, between two variables x and y . Specifically, the test defines that y can be better predicted using the history of both, y and x , than a restricted model which only includes the history of y . However, his test does not assume a counter-factual scenario as the Neyman-Rubin model, and its interpretations are more limited (Sekhon, 2008).

To assess the relationship between these two variables I first test the Granger-causality between small scale events and the total number of claims using a lag of one period. Table S6.3 below shows the results of the F-test under Granger-causality assumptions. Here, we observe that when the total number of claims is used as dependent variable and small-scale events as explanatory variable there is a high chance of not-rejecting the null hypothesis (no Granger-causality). In other words, it is unlikely that rebellion might Granger-cause claims. At the same time, we observe that when using small scale events as dependent variable we obtain a higher probability of rejecting the null-hypothesis. That is, the total number of claims might cause small-scale rebellions.

Additionally, I tested the relationship between the percentage of successful claims and small scale events. Here, the F-test reveals that there is a higher likelihood that small scale events would Granger-cause successful claims than the other way around. These results cast some doubts on the dynamics between claims and small-scale events, they also suggest that —under some circumstances— these events of collective action created pressures for the colonial state to grant favorable outcomes. However, there is still some uncertainty regarding this relationship which needs to be addressed more closely.

Table S6.3: **Granger Test Results**

Dependent variable	Explanatory variable	Pr(>F)
Total files	Small scale events	0.54
Small scale events	Total files	0.02
% protection	Small scale events	0.02
Small scale events	% protection	0.20

S7 Building the power of local elites variable

The encomienda system set in place in the Americas initially was intended to reward *conquistadores* with a combination of Indian tribute and personal service (Simpson, 1966). This system empowered the European settlers who remained unchecked and unaccountable. Over time, the Crown eliminated individual encomienda rights in favor of direct rule by royal officials (*corregimientos* and *alcaldias mayores*). This paper takes advantage of the staggered process of encomienda elimination to estimate local elite power. To create this variable, I use a two-step approach which involves, first, calculating the share of population contributed by a locality within a province, and then tracing the timing of the encomienda system for that locality. The objective is to estimate the percentage of indigenous population living under encomienda system within each colonial province during different time periods.

To measure the population share contributed by each locality I relied on the population counts at locality level published by Sherburne Cook and Wodrow Borah (Cook and Borah, 1971). These authors compiled data from the different surveys known as *Relaciones Geograficas* carried out by the Spanish authorities circa 1568. These surveys provide the most comprehensive account of the indigenous population in central Mexico at town level, derived from a sample of about 90% of towns.⁶ According Cook and Borah (1971), the counting is also fairly consistent and comparable across regions. In total, there are about 1,400 towns in this sample.

Using the list provided by Cook and Borah I recorded the population of each town using as basis the list of Indian towns created by Dorothy Tanck de Estrada (Tanck de Estrada, 2005). The rationale behind using this list is that it contains the latitude and longitude for each town making possible to geo-locate them within both colonial province or modern Mexican states using a GIS package. This list is based on the existing towns during 1800, for this reason it is likely that some localities recorded in 1568 that disappeared or were integrated into larger ones do not appear here. In fact, 38% of towns couldn't be matched by name or region.⁷ However, these towns tended to be small since population sum at province and country level is very similar to the one recorded by Cook and Borah. Whereas Cook and Borah calculate that the indigenous population of 1568 was 2.65 million, after matching towns with Tancks's list I obtain a total of 2.12 million.

After matching each of this towns I calculated their population shares within province. For example, if a province A has two towns recorded in 1568, town x with 100 inhabitants, and town y with 50 then town x contributes two thirds of the total population and town y one third of the total population. This

⁶The subsequent population counts used in this paper do not have data with this level of granularity. For this reason, it was not possible to replicate this process for all periods. These counts offer, however, a good representation of the population at the province level, which is the unit of analysis in the econometric approach.

⁷In total I recorded the population of 841 towns. An additional problem is related with towns with similar names that cannot be disambiguated by location.

weighting is crucial to avoid the over-representation of smaller town or the underrepresentation of larger ones.

The second step in this process was to calculate the percentage of the indigenous population living under *encomienda*. This step involved a second matching between Tanck's lists of indigenous towns with their population in 1568 and the towns recorded by Peter Gerhard in his *Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Gerhard, 1972). In this invaluable source Gerhard describes the trajectory of the *encomienda* system within each province. This systematic account usually offers a record of the exact moment in time when the *encomienda* disappeared for each town. Using this information, I then computed the towns that were under *encomienda* system during 1550, 1570, 1600, 1645, 1745, and 1800 which are the dates available in the population counts. The main assumption here is that, even if the total population of the province changed over time, the share of each town remains constant. Then, using each of these time-cuts and the towns under *encomienda* I calculated the percentage of population that remained under this system.

To clarify the process let's take the province of Acatlan y Piaxtla located in southern Puebla as an example. According to the list created by Tanck de Estrada, in this province there were 22 Indian towns in 1800. The larger population centers are recorded by Cook and Borah in their account for 1568. These towns are also recorded by Gerhard with their respective *encomienda* ending dates. Table S7.1 summarizes the information from both data sources for this province.

This table highlights several common elements found across all 212 provinces in New Spain, New Vizcaya, and the northern and southern frontiers. First, only eight of the towns have population information in Cook and Borah's account. The main reason for this discrepancy is that most of the small towns are actually *sujetos* (dependants) of one of the bigger towns and therefore their population is integrated into these. This is the case of Totoltepec which depends of Acatlan. This *sujeto-cabecera* structure is a heritage of pre-colonial rule in which kingdoms controlled and taxed smaller polity units. Across time many of these towns separated and declared their independence and become its own *cabecera*.⁸ Another possible reason for this discrepancy is the creation of new towns or *barrios* between 1568 and 1800. Although, without further research, it is impossible to know the exact date when these were created their existence do not modify the quantity of interest, that is, the initial population shares in 1568. As mentioned above, another source of bias that could be concerning for this study is the disappearance of towns. However, the towns that appear in Cook and Borah's list but could not be identified in Tanck de Estrada's list tended to be small and have a minor effect in population proportions.

According to this table by 1550, during the first population count available, all towns in the province of Acatlan y Piaxtla were under the *encomienda* system with the exception of Acatlan and its *sujeto* To-

⁸These conflicts between *sujeto-cabecera* actually appear in many of the documents of the GIC (Borah, 1983, p.212)

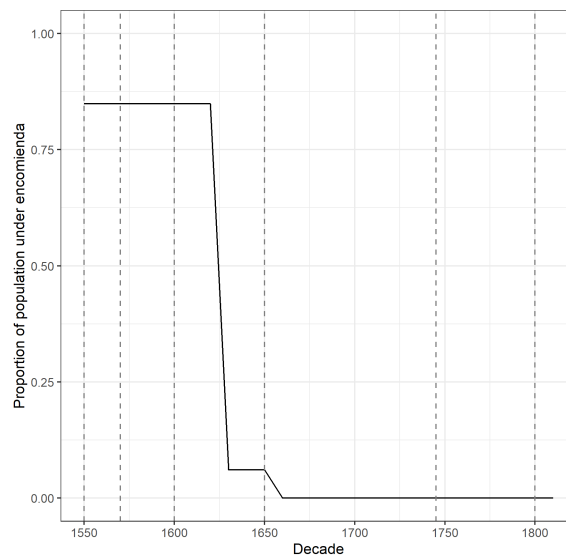
Table S7.1: Population Shares Calculation and Encomienda Tracing for Acatlan y Piaxtla

Town (Tanck de Estrada)	Population in 1568 (Cook and Borah)	%	Encomienda system (Gerhard)	Notes
Acatlan	2,612	15.1	Ended in 1532	It also includes Totoltepec as "sujeto". Juan Bernal appears as encomendero. There is also documentation about a cacicazgo for Alejandra Villagomez.
Chapultepec	565	3.2		In Cook and Borah's list appears as Chapulco. It was located inside Acatlan by geography and patron saint's name (San Jose). Possibly a sujeto of Petlalcingo.
Chila	1,690	9.7	Ended in 1626	There are two Chilas in Cook and Borah's list with similar populations. The Poblador Rodrigo Baeza appear as encomendero
Chinantla	2,690	15.5		Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly sujeto of Piaxtla.
Ilamacingo				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah or in Gerhard
Ixitlan	1,056	6.1	According to Gerhard: "the place remained private encomienda well into the 17 century".	According to Gerhard the encomendero is Francisco Velazquez de Lara.
Petlalcingo	422	2.4	Ended in 1620	Santos Hernandez appears as encomendero.
Piaxtla	1848	10.6	Ended in 1626	Francisco de Olmos is named as encomendero.
Tecuautitlan				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly a sujeto of Tlaxcuapan
Tehuizingo				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly a sujeto of Tuzantlan
Tejalpa				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly a subject of Tuzantlan
Tepejillo				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah or in Gerhard
Tlaxcuapan	5,075	29.3	Ended in 1626 (same as Piaxtla)	There is no data about this locality in encomiendas but is listed as Piaxtla sujeto.
Tonahuixtla				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly a sujeto of Acatlan
Totoltepec			Ended in 1532	Listed as sujeto of Acatlan
Tuzantlan	1,340	7.7	Ended in 1626	
Xayacatlan				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah but was possibly a sujeto of Acatlan
Amicano				Doesn't appear in Cook and Borah unclear which one could be the cabecera
Asuxtla				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah
Santa Cruz Nueva				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah
Tecomatlan				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah or in Gerhard
Yeloixtlahuacan				It doesn't appear in Cook and Borah
TOTAL	17,298	100		

toltepec. These towns were put under corregimiento in 1532 (Wauchope, 2014). Therefore, I calculated that for the 1550 time-cut 84.8 percent of the indigenous population was under encomienda. By the next time-cuts of 1570 and 1600 nothing seems to have change in terms of encomienda system. The next big change took place in 1620 and 1626 when Petlalcingo, Piaxtla (and its sujetos), and Tuzantlan encomiendas ended. Therefore, for the next time-cut of 1645 the percentage of population under encomienda is only 6.1 percent. According to Gerhard (1972), Ixtlan remained as a private encomienda “well into the 17 century”. Although we do not have the exact ending date of the encomienda, I assumed that it lasted until circa 1650. For this reason, by the next time-cut the province has not indigenous population living under encomienda system. Figure S7.1 shows this staggered process for Acatlan y Piaxtla, the vertical lines represent the time-cuts for which population counts are available.

For this paper, the main assumption is that provinces in which a larger share of the population was under the control of encomenderos elites will be more powerful, remain unchecked, and possibly maintain a stronger control of the local economy—even after the formal disappearance of the encomienda. The local elites within a province are classified as strong if the percentage of population living under encomienda is larger than the period average.

Figure S7.1: **Proportion of Indigenous Population Living under the Encomienda System in Acatlan y Piaxtla**



NOTE: The vertical lines represent the periods for existing population counts.

S8 Assumptions for strategic ruling of cases

In this section, I illustrate of the parameters that can be used to determine if the decision of the court is impartial or strategic under two different scenarios of local balance of power. The ultimate goal of this analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of the assumptions behind the interpretation of the GIC as a strategic court.

To begin, let's assume that cases can have high or low merits. Additionally, cases can be produced in a province with strong local elites or a within a province with weak local elites:

Table S8.1: **Scenarios based on merits and province type**

LE \ Merit	High	Low
	Strong	H^S
Weak	H^W	L^W

Here, H^S/H^W represent cases with high merits produced in provinces with strong/weak local elites. L^S/L^W represent cases with low merits produced in provinces with strong/weak local elites.

Then, let's assume a the scenario in which the court is *perfectly impartial*. In this case the only criteria to provide favorable ruling would be the merits of the case. That is, the probability of a high merit case of receiving favorable ruling is one ($Pr(F = 1|H) = 1$) and zero otherwise. In other words, the court only considers the merits of the case. Therefore, the expected rate of favorable cases is: $\frac{H^S + H^W}{H + L}$, where $H = H^S + H^W$ and $L = L^S + L^W$.

Now let's assume a scenario in which the court is *purely strategic*. Here, the only criteria to provide favorable ruling would be the type of province. That is, $Pr(F = 1|S) = 1$. Therefore, the expected rate of favorable cases is: $\frac{H^S + L^S}{H + L}$.

Finally, we can also observe a scenario of *strategic weighting* in which the outcome of the case depends on its merits AND on the characteristic of the province. In this scenario strategic considerations can override the merits. I argue that this is the most likely scenario because strategic courts rarely ignore the merits of the case, they rather provide different weights to cases with comparable merits produced under different circumstances. That is, a high merit case produced in a province with strong local elites will have higher probability of receiving favorable ruling than a high merit case from a province with weak elites: $Pr(F = 1|H\&S) > Pr(F = 1|H\&W)$. At the same time, a case with low merits produced in a province with strong local elites will have higher probability of receiving favorable ruling than a low merit case from a province with weak elites: $Pr(F = 1|L\&S) > Pr(F = 1|L\&W)$. If we also consider that, once we condition by the characteristics of the province, the merits of the case could play a role we also should observe that $Pr(F = 1|H\&S) \geq Pr(F = 1|L\&S)$ and $Pr(F = 1|H\&W) \geq Pr(F = 1|L\&W)$.

That is, conditioned on the strength of the local elites, a high merit case will be equally or more likely to receive favorable ruling than a low merit case. Combining these assumptions we obtain the following relationships: $Pr(F = 1|H\&S) \geq Pr(F = 1|L\&S) \geq Pr(F = 1|H\&W) \geq Pr(F = 1|L\&W)$. Therefore, under strategic weighting, the expected rate of favorable cases becomes:

$$\frac{Pr(F = 1|H\&S) * H^S + Pr(F = 1|H\&W) * H^S + Pr(F = 1|L\&S) * L^S + Pr(F = 1|L\&W) * L^W}{H + L}$$

A straightforward way to characterize the GIC in each of these categories is observing different rates of favorable ruling according to these scenarios. For the full sample of indigenous claims, based on merit and type of province we observe:

Table S8.2: **Rates of protection based on merits and province type (LE)**

LE \ Merit	High	Low
Strong	27%	20%
Weak	19%	10%

These rates show that the scenario in which a case is more likely to receive favorable ruling is when the merits of the case are high AND the provincial local elites are strong. On the contrary, cases with low merits AND weak local elites present very low rate of protection. Similarly, when we compare cases with similar merits, cases with stronger local elites present higher rates of protection. Finally, we also observe that the merits of the case play a role. However, the fact that difference between high and low merit cases in provinces with strong elites is relatively low (7%) also suggest that strategic considerations tend to override these merits. The results presented in table S8.2 are compatible with the assumption of a court which applies strategic weighting.

We can apply the same logic to scenarios in which the indigenous populations is under decline:

Table S8.3: **Scenarios based on merits and province type (Population)**

Pop. \ Merit	High	Low
Decline	25%	24%
Increase	16%	9%

Again, we observe that again cases with high merits AND from provinces with declining indigenous population present the highest rates of protection. These rates also show that, in fact, the merits of the case don't seem to be a defining factor behind the decision of the court since the rates for low and high merit cases are quite similar under population decline. These results strongly suggest that the GIC

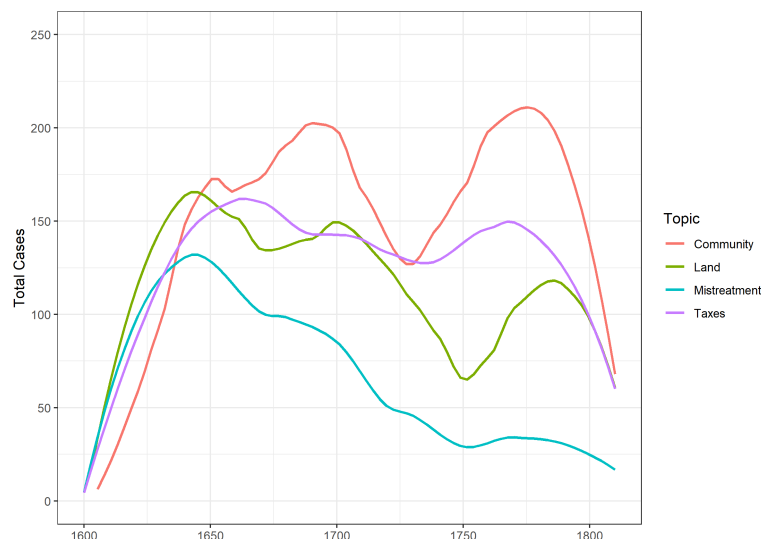
applied strategic weighting in its rulings.

S9 Addressing Litigant-Driven Selection Bias

S9.1 Plaintiff-driven bias

In the paper, I argue that the behavior of indigenous plaintiffs could be a potential source of bias. This bias might be influencing the type of observed cases and, therefore, the final outcome. Potentially, indigenous plaintiffs could have been sending cases strategically. Specifically, optimizing those with a higher probability of obtaining a favorable ruling. This behavior assumes that indigenous plaintiffs were able to learn from past decisions and act accordingly. To assess this “Bayesian behavior” I traced the total number of cases across time by topic. Figure S9.1 shows that all cases increased significantly after the establishment of the GIC during the early seventeenth century. Then, community related cases seem to be more prevalent after 1650 followed by tax related cases. These trends are relevant because those are precisely the cases with lower probability of receiving a favorable ruling, thus suggesting that Indigenous claimants were not submitting cases strategically. This is not entirely surprising considering that an Indigenous community perhaps had information on the outcomes of its own claims but it is unlikely that they had information on how the court ruled on the universe of cases. Interestingly, mistreatment related cases decrease over time. Considering that these cases had a high probability of receiving a favorable ruling, a plausible interpretation is that the GIC was an efficient institution in controlling excessive abuses.

Figure S9.1: Claims by topic across time



NOTE: These lines represent the total number of cases by topic during the existence of the GIC. The lines are smoothed with a loess smoother using a span=0.5.

To provide further evidence of the lack of Bayesian behavior on the part of indigenous plaintiffs, in Table S9.1 I show a regression analysis using the topic of the case as dependent variable. The explanatory variables are the power of the local elites, the demographic status of the indigenous population, and the prior rate of protection. The prior rate of protection is the percentage of successful cases during the previous 50 years for that topic within each province. The aim of this variable is to capture a potential learning process. If indigenous claimants were strategic we might expect that the probability of prior success increased the likelihood of certain topics. All models control by province and time fixed effects, as well as a province-level time trend.

The results show that the local elites' power doesn't affect the probability of certain topics. That is, there is no evidence of a potential strategy on the part of indigenous claimants to submit cases with a higher likelihood of success when local elites were stronger. Similarly, if indigenous plaintiffs were strategic we would observe a positive relationship between land and mistreatment cases and population decline. This is not the case. In fact, we observe that when population is under decline there are less land related cases, which might be related to the limited number of claimants. Finally, the prior rate of protection is negatively associated with land and mistreatment cases. These results suggest that successful judicial processes limited the probability of similar cases in the future, not the other way around.

Another way to test the bayesian behavior of Indigenous plaintiffs is to identify the patterns of those communities that used the GIC more intensively. The assumption is that those communities had more information about the strategic behavior of the court and, therefore, submitted cases with a higher probability of obtaining favorable ruling. To asses this hypothesis, in Figure S9.2 I plot the percentage of cases that received a favorable ruling for provinces with high and low court usage. I defined high intensity provinces as those that submitted more than 100 cases during the existence of the GIC. In total, there are 43 provinces in the high intensity category and 134 in the low intensity one. The figure shows that there is practically no difference in the rate of successful cases across these two types of provinces. These results suggest that even communities with a high degree of knowledge of court cases did not followed a strategic behavior.⁹

⁹This does not mean, however, that Indigenous plaintiffs did not learn the procedures of the court and used them in their favor. There is evidence that Indigenous claimants appropriated terms like "miserables" and "poor vassals" to call attention to their cases (Owensby, 2008). On the light of the results of this paper it is likely that they applied these linguistic strategies to advance their case regardless of the topic, the actors involved, or the local balance of powers.

Table S9.1: **Topics of the Case and Prior Success**

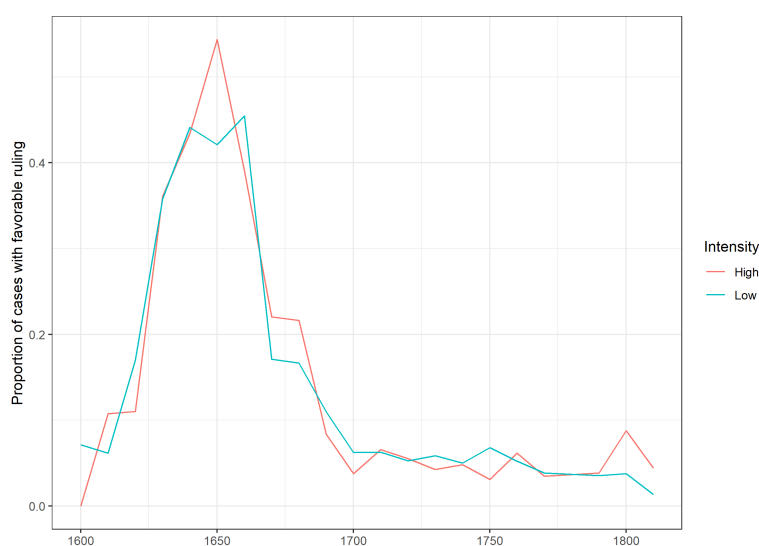
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<i>Topic of the claim</i>			
	Land	Mistreatment	Taxes	Community
Local Elite Power	0.019 (0.031)	-0.012 (0.030)	-0.045 (0.033)	0.029 (0.042)
Pop. decline	-0.042** (0.021)	-0.001 (0.025)	-0.052* (0.029)	0.012 (0.027)
Prior rate of protection	-0.013 (0.033)	-0.034* (0.020)	0.009 (0.029)	-0.005 (0.032)
Province controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Province linear trend	Y	Y	Y	Y
Units	127	127	127	127
Observations	9,375	9,375	9,375	9,375
Adjusted R ²	0.026	0.047	0.044	0.034

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The dependent variables are the topics of each claim. Local elite's power is measured as a binary indicator taking the value of one when the indigenous population under *encomienda* (indirect ruling) is larger than the period mean. Population decrease is a binary indicator taking the value of one when the province population is declining. The prior rate of protection is the percentage of cases with successful ruling for indigenous claimants in the previous 50 years for each topic within a specific province. All models control for province and time fixed effects as well as for a province-specific linear time trend. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

Figure S9.2: **Favorable Ruling for Provinces with High and Low Court Intensity Usage**



NOTE: Percentage of claims with favorable ruling in provinces with high and low intensity of court usage. High-intensity provinces are those with more than 100 cases during the whole period.

S9.2 Defendant-driven bias

This article shows how the GIC favored Indigenous claimants conditioned on the interests of the Crown. A plausible critique for this interpretation is related to the defendant-driven bias. This bias implies that the court might observe only certain types of cases if the process to submit claims is somehow blocked or manipulated by the defendants (the local elites or bureaucrats accused by the indigenous claimants). Although it is very likely that defendants tried to block the access to court, I argue that this bias does not jeopardize the interpretation of a strategic court.

As shown in the main text, provinces with stronger local elites are more likely to receive favorable rulings. If we assume that more powerful actors are more likely to block the access to court, then the defendant-driven bias means that the court might not be observing cases produced in provinces in which local elites are *very strong*. If this is the case, then the observed estimates are only a lower bound of the local elite effect in the decision to adjudicate cases. To illustrate this point we can consider the simplified example from table S9.2. Here, the cases that are observed by the court come from provinces in which local elites are weak or strong, but there is also a number of unobserved cases from provinces with very strong local elites. Following the logic of a strategic court and the results from previous sections, the table shows how in provinces with stronger local elites there is a higher rate of favorable cases. For this theoretical example, there is a total of 20 observed cases with a percentage of favorable cases equal to

55%. However, if the court was able to rule on the cases from provinces with very strong local elites as well the rate of favorable cases would be 63%. For this reason, I argue that this process is actually biasing the estimates towards zero, therefore creating a higher burden of proof.

Table S9.2: **Observed and Unobserved Ruling According to Local Elite Type**

	Type of Local Elite	Favorable	Non favorable
Observed	Weak	5	5
	Strong	6	4
Unobserved	Very Strong	8	2

S10 Single-topic cases and concurrences

To classify the independent variable this paper uses a key-term approach to identify terms associated to each of the four topics of interest. Because many claims relate to two or more topics I remained agnostic about which of those topics are more relevant in the claim. For this reason, the main models in the paper do not have a multicollinearity problem and, therefore, do not present an excluded category. A plausible caveat of this approach is that concurrence of topics might be masking some dynamics and limiting our ability to differentiate which topics are actually motivating favorable outcomes. For example, mistreatment claims also associated with land related cases might be receiving a favorable ruling because the importance of the land claim but not for reasons related to their own merits. To study this potential bias in detail in this section I subsample the cases which are associated to a single topic.

Table S10.1 shows a matrix of concurrences. The cells located in the diagonal represent the single-topic cases. For example, there are 3,152 cases that refer *only* to land related issues. Similarly, we observe that the cells below the diagonal represent cases in which two topics concur. Here we observe that, for example there are 156 cases in related to land and mistreatment.¹⁰ Although, overall concurrence doesn't appear to be prevalent it is useful to observe the results of this subsample to corroborate that they have a similar interpretation.

Table S10.1: **Single-Topic Cases and Concurrences**

	Land	Mistreatment	Taxes	Community
Land	3,152			
Mistreatment	156	1,689		
Taxes	170	210	2,994	
Community	125	127	373	2,784

Table S10.2 shows the results for Model 1 (in the main text) using the subsample of topics with a single case. A crucial difference with the main results is that, because of multicollinearity, one topic is assigned as a reference category, in this case, land related claims. The results in column 1 show that, related to land cases, all other cases have a lower probability to receive favorable ruling. However, similarly to the main results mistreatment related cases are more likely than taxes and community related cases respectively. The table also presents the effects under different scenarios of population decline and local elite strength. In general, we observe that all topics are less likely to receive favorable ruling compared to land related cases. We also observe that the relative difference across coefficients increases in scenarios

¹⁰Cases with two or more topics represent only 8% of total cases.

of population decrease and strong local elites. These results align with the theoretical expectations and the general assumptions of a strategic court.

Table S10.2: **Favorable Ruling, Topics, and Balance of Power (Single-topic cases)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	All	Population		Favorable Ruling Local Elites		Population Declie & LE Strong LE Weak	
	(1)	Decline (2)	Increase (3)	Strong (4)	Weak (5)	(6)	(7)
Mistreatment	-0.098*** (0.022)	-0.154*** (0.055)	-0.057*** (0.020)	-0.170*** (0.056)	-0.087*** (0.024)	-0.222 (0.147)	-0.068 (0.082)
Taxes	-0.145*** (0.028)	-0.304*** (0.038)	-0.074*** (0.021)	-0.237*** (0.065)	-0.096*** (0.020)	-0.372*** (0.085)	-0.257*** (0.079)
Community	-0.183*** (0.026)	-0.367*** (0.039)	-0.119*** (0.018)	-0.304*** (0.070)	-0.133*** (0.017)	-0.411** (0.176)	-0.339*** (0.060)
Province controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Province time trends	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Units	153	104	127	58	122	54	58
Observations	5,176	1,326	3,431	927	3,441	304	638
Adjusted R ²	0.278	0.291	0.141	0.217	0.272	0.246	0.366

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

NOTE: Linear regressions. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for favorable ruling according to the classification from the rule-based method. The explanatory variables are also produced from the same coding process. land related cases is the category of reference. The first column shows the effect of the topic of the claim on favorable ruling using the entire sample. Columns 2 and 3 test the effect of population vulnerability. A province is considered under population decline if the Indigenous population is smaller than the previous decade. Columns 4 and 5 show the effect of elite power. Provinces with strong local elites are those in which population under encomienda is higher than the period average. Finally, columns 6 and 7 show the effect of claims topics after conditioning on population decline and different levels of elite strength. All models include province and time fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at province level.

S11 Analysis of Colonial Archives

The main data source for this article are the colonial archives stored in the *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN) in Mexico City. This archive stores an invaluable document collection equivalent to more than 4 kilometers in extension (AGN, 2021). The archive also contains maps, paintings, and Indian made codex. This article uses Linda Arnold's Finding Aids (ARENET, 2021), an electronic catalog for the 619,000 individual colonial documents. In this catalog, each document is linked to the following metadata:

- The year in which the document was produced (in some cases it can span several years).
- The title, which is a storing ID within the AGN and describes the different subarchives.
- The file numeric ID within the subarchive (expediente).
- The institution that produced the document.
- A general summary of the document describing its characteristics, people involved, and location.

Using this dataset we can identify the general trend of colonial document production. Figure S11.1 shows the number of documents produced each year by colonial authorities, indigenous subjects, the catholic Church, and individual actors. Here, we observe that before 1750 document production remained relative stable. There was a peak around 1590 when the General Indian Court first begin its activities, but the main increase in document production is related to the Bourbon reforms in the late eighteen century.

Figure S11.1: Total Files in the Colonial Archives by Year

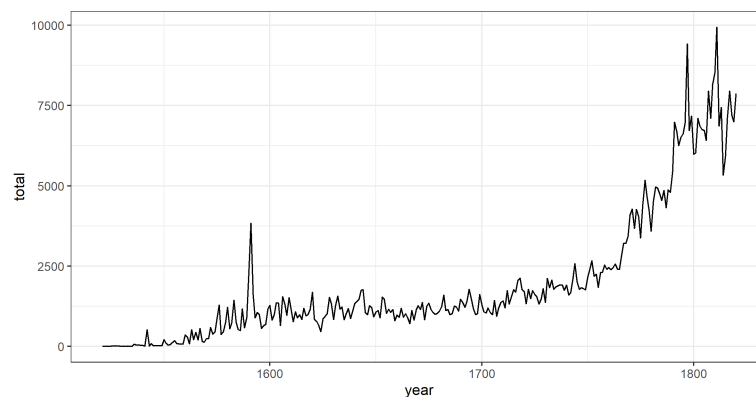


Table S11.1 summarizes the main topic categories in the archive (subarchives). The largest subarchive is *Reales cédulas originales*, which contains documents produced by the Spanish Crown and addressed to colonial authorities, mainly mandates, letters and legal orders. The second largest subarchive is related

to inquisition trials, followed by documents related to Church administration (bienes nacionales), and Indian affairs.

The Indios subarchive contains all documents related to the indigenous population, mainly related to conflicts about land property, *amparo* petitions, complains about working conditions, and conflicts between Indigenous communities and with other castes. Because the main mandate of the General Indian Court was to resolve these conflicts we can assume that the documents produced after 1592 contained in this subarchive were processed by the GIC. Here it is important to note that the original subarchive contains 27,271 files, however, I identified several documents related to the conflicts between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population that were classified in other subarchives. To include these documents I parsed through the title and the producer of each document and included them in the “Indios” subarchive if these fields contained the words “Indios” or “Naturales”. This process allowed me to retrieve several files which producer appeared with a slightly different name, for example, “juzgado de indios”, “tribunal de indios”, or “juzgado general de naturales”, all these mentions are simply a different way in which individual notaries referred to the GIC. Using this method I was able to recover 3,476 additional files. In total, there are 30,747 documents that can be linked to the GIC.

Table S11.1: **Top Ten Categories in the Colonial Archives**

Topic	N
reales cédulas originales	47,185
inquisicion	38,316
bienes nacionales	35,081
indios*	30,747
general de parte	27,993
tierras	27,066
reales cédulas duplicadas	22,731
matrimonios	16,562
mercedes	14,560
casa de moneda	11,638

*Including the mentions of “Indios” or “Naturales”

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