

Introduction

IN AUGUST 2016, A GROUP of street vendors in the Mexico City neighborhood of Tepito submitted a request to the capital's mayor: they wanted to be included in the city's new constitution. At the time, a constituent congress was preparing to draft the constitution as part of a political reorganization that turned Mexico's Federal District into the country's thirty-second state, giving the capital city autonomy from the federal government for the first time since 1824. Interest groups from across the city weighed in, pressuring delegates to address their concerns and enshrine new rights. The vendors of Tepito, for their part, wanted the constitution to protect their right to sell in the street. In exchange, they offered the government a compromise: more than three thousand members of their vendor organization would "formalize" themselves—paying all the necessary taxes and submitting to the relevant regulation. That act, they assured the mayor, would produce at least three hundred million pesos in additional revenue to the government every year, a windfall for the administration and the capital's residents. Formalize our rights, the vendors promised, and we will formalize our businesses.¹

Tepito is Mexico City's iconic *barrio bravo*—its most infamous rough neighborhood—and the reputed hub of its black market. It has a longstanding reputation for crime, poverty, and a culture of lawlessness. Its residents often pride themselves on their fierce resistance to government intrusion; "obstinate Tepito" is one of its monikers. The neighborhood has produced many of Mexico's most famous boxers, and it hosts one of the most prominent shrines to La Santa Muerte, the patron saint of drug traffickers and other criminals.² Tepito's oppositional identity is closely linked to the sprawling street market that fills its streets and sidewalks. Six days a week (the vendors rest on Tuesdays), thousands of consumers peruse clothing,

electronics, and every type of household good imaginable underneath a web of multicolored plastic tarps. Many of those goods are pirated, which is to say illegally reproduced, or they are contraband, meaning they entered the country without payment of import taxes. This commerce forms part of Mexico's informal economy—the buying and selling that takes place off the books, outside the nation's regulatory system. Behind closed doors, more nefarious transactions unfold. Periodic police raids reveal distribution centers for arms and narcotics.³ For all these reasons, writers have described Tepito as a place fully outside the law—“the land of no one, the center of uncontainable criminal power.”⁴ But Tepito does not exist in a world of its own, somehow detached from the rest of Mexican society. In reality, the men and women who make their living in extralegal street commerce have been central to the economic and political life of Mexico City for hundreds of years.

Tepito was not always the nucleus of Mexico City's black market. That reputation developed during the twentieth century, after a market called the Baratillo moved there. For three hundred years, the Baratillo—from the Spanish word *barato*, or cheap—was the city's principal marketplace for second-hand goods and its most notorious thieves' market. New and used manufactured products—including clothing, tools, furniture, and books—circulated alongside stolen jewelry, counterfeit coins, and illegal weapons. The Baratillo's reputation was every bit as sinister as Tepito's is today. Church officials in the eighteenth century called it “the center of wickedness” and “a refuge for lost men.”⁵ Exposés in Mexico's nineteenth-century press detailed the depravity of the market and the people who gathered there: one author called it “Hell's ante-room.”⁶ Authorities banned it on a number of occasions, yet the market outlasted every government of the colonial and early-national eras. Indeed, the Baratillo never went away: after moving to Tepito in 1902, the market gradually outgrew the confines of the plaza there and spread through the surrounding streets. By the mid-twentieth century, the Baratillo and Tepito were synonymous. Tepito had become the black-market barrio.

What explains the persistence of an institution that many Mexico City residents saw as a magnet for crime and a threat to the social order? Answering that question requires looking beyond government decrees and impressionistic accounts of the market to explore the shadowy networks that linked the Baratillo's vendors to mercantile and political elites in Mexico City. The Baratillo, it turns out, served far more people than criminals and the poor. In the colonial era, vendors in the market—*baratilleros*, as they were known—traded with some of the wealthiest overseas merchants in Mexico. In the

nineteenth century, prominent newspaper publishers sided with vendors in their disputes with local and national authorities (despite the sensational stories those same papers printed about the crimes that took place in the market). Even the local government at times worked to keep the Baratillo in business. The vendors may have traded in stolen goods, but they paid rent to the city—revenue the municipal government, or Ayuntamiento, welcomed.⁷ Baratilleros were not passive actors in these relationships. They sent petitions to government officials, filed lawsuits, curried favor with the press, and used the apparatuses of local and national government to assert the legitimacy of their trade and defend their right to practice it in public streets and plazas. Baratilleros possessed political capital—black market capital—that they employed with striking success. The Baratillo flourished for hundreds of years, then, because diverse actors conspired to preserve it. Those individuals forged alliances that extended from the streets to the halls of government to the pages of the capital’s newspapers. The Baratillo was not simply a site for illicit economic exchange; it was also a place where men and women from across the social spectrum engaged in Mexican politics. In Mexico City, the black market was as much a political institution as it was an economic one.⁸

This book traces the history of the Baratillo from its first appearance in the historical record in the mid-seventeenth century through its relocation to Tepito at the beginning of the twentieth. In doing so, it sheds light on one of Mexico City’s most enduring yet least-understood institutions. The Baratillo, like Tepito today, played an outsized role in the Mexican imagination, symbolizing everything that was criminal, dangerous, and lowly. It was the subject of the first important work of satire written in Mexico, the eighteenth-century “Ordenanzas del Baratillo,” and it appears a number of times in José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s *El periquillo sarniento*—considered the first Latin American novel.⁹ The eighteenth-century *Diccionario de gobierno y legislación de las Indias* defines “Baratillo” as an illicit marketplace in Mexico City, even though many other cities in Spanish America had their own *baratillos* (in this study, I capitalize Mexico City’s Baratillo to distinguish it from the others).¹⁰ Indeed, although the Baratillo, in its general form or purpose, was not unique to Mexico or even the Hispanic world—London had its Rag Fair and Lisbon its Feira da Ladra, to name just two examples—few other second-hand markets had the high profile or the staying power of Mexico City’s Baratillo.¹¹ Despite the Baratillo’s notoriety, longevity, and importance to the society and economy of Mexico City, this study is the first to reconstruct its history.¹²

In narrating the Baratillo's long history, this book contributes to our understanding of urban life in Mexico and Latin America in several ways. First, it reveals the centrality of extralegal commerce to the broader economy of Mexico City between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. The Baratillo was the hub of the city's shadow economy, which incorporated illicit, informal, as well as legal second-hand exchanges and engaged men and women of all backgrounds. These trade circuits flourished in the gray areas, or shadows, of Spanish and Mexican law. Second, the book highlights the multifaceted nature of the state in Mexico City. Baratilleros dealt with local, imperial, and national authorities that pursued different political agendas, some of which coincided with their own. The state in Mexico City was never a single actor but many competing ones, and vendors in the Baratillo used those rivalries to their advantage. Third, the book deepens our understanding of urban politics in Mexico City between the late-colonial era and the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Baratillo did not survive solely because of the economic benefits it provided to urban residents; it also endured because the baratilleros used the political tools available to them in every era to assert its relevance. Vendors who trafficked in the shadow economy enjoyed a degree of access that historians have rarely observed among non-elite actors prior to the twentieth century. Fourth and lastly, the book offers a new perspective on urban public space in Mexico. The Baratillo's history shows that streets and plazas were not simply venues for conflict between elite and popular groups, as the traditional view holds. Nor did diverse individuals merely rub shoulders with one another in the Baratillo. Instead, the market plaza was a site where men and women from all walks of life exchanged goods and ideas.

THE SHADOW ECONOMY

The Baratillo played a vital role in the local economy. For over three hundred years, it provisioned Mexico City's consumers with textiles, tools, and household goods and provided employment to hundreds of vendors and their families at any given time.¹³ While economic policies in Mexico shifted dramatically between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries—from mercantilism to free trade to industrialization—the Baratillo's product mix remained remarkably constant.¹⁴ No matter what political regime ruled the country or which economic paradigm its leaders adopted, Mexican consumers demanded the kinds of goods the Baratillo offered, regardless of their provenance.¹⁵

The Baratillo thrived in the contested space between legality and illegality. The market's very existence was a legal contradiction: royal and national authorities repeatedly banned it, yet local officials allowed it to continue, treating it, in some ways, as any other public marketplace. The transactions that took place in the Baratillo do not fit neatly into any single legal category, either. By reputation, it was the city's main distribution point for stolen, prohibited, or otherwise illicit goods—the trade that readers today know as the black market.¹⁶ Yet some exchanges in the Baratillo did not violate any laws. Other transactions might fall under the modern-day category of the informal economy.¹⁷ The Baratillo's opponents routinely complained that baratilleros did not pay taxes on their sales, and, during the colonial era, many vendors in the market sold outside the highly regulated channels of the guild system, which stipulated who had the right to sell a particular good and where. Although such actions were technically illegal, officials generally did not view them as antisocial—as threatening to the social peace.¹⁸ Vendors and their advocates added further ambiguity by routinely challenging authorities' interpretation of the law. The Baratillo's history thus highlights the malleable boundary between legality and illegality and the ways that actors from across the social spectrum helped shape its contours.¹⁹

The Baratillo and the larger shadow economy of which it formed a part linked diverse individuals and institutions in Mexico City. While the Baratillo may have catered primarily to the city's poor and working classes, urban elites and individuals from the capital's middle sectors also benefited from it.²⁰ The shadow economy connected the Baratillo to pawnshops, artisans' workshops, import warehouses, and residents' homes. It involved Spaniards, Indians, and people of mixed race. Historians have previously shown that commerce in colonial Spanish American cities created economic and social ties between men and women of different backgrounds; this study suggests that those connections continued well after independence.²¹

The Baratillo's beneficiaries also included government officials. Public marketplaces produced large and relatively consistent revenue streams for Mexico City's Ayuntamiento, and municipal officials fiercely defended their jurisdiction over them. City council members often pushed back against colonial or national officials who tried to disband the Baratillo, fearing the loss of income that would result. Market administrators also had personal investments in the Baratillo. They typically earned salaries for overseeing the market, or a percentage of the fees they collected, and they received *gratificaciones*, or bribes, that vendors paid them to facilitate transfers of their stalls.

These were informal transactions that vendors and municipal officials institutionalized over time. The mere act of categorizing the Baratillo as a public marketplace and collecting rent from its vendors conferred a degree of legitimacy on those businesses. In these ways, agents of the state often did more to sustain the Baratillo than to rein it in.²²

THE STATE

The involvement of state actors in the Baratillo reveals the limitations of the concept of “the state” itself for the study of Mexican history. There was no consistent state agenda when it came to the Baratillo. From the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, authorities expressed ambivalence about the market. After furious attempts to disband it in the 1690s, the Spanish Crown made little effort to enforce those prohibitions in the eighteenth century, even as it intervened aggressively in many other areas of Mexico’s economy and society. National-era governments followed the same pattern, issuing edicts that ordered the market to disappear only to rescind or forget about them later. Local officials, charged with regulating the day-to-day affairs of the city and providing public services to its residents, rarely shared the same priorities as national ones. Some had personal relationships with the baratilleros, forming patronage networks that mixed business and politics. The varied and often conflicting objectives of authorities in Mexico City meant that baratilleros never confronted a unitary government. This book thus disaggregates the state, seeing it not as a single actor but many competing ones.

Rivalries between government authorities in the capital, particularly between local and national officials, date to the colonial period, when members of the Ayuntamiento, dominated by American-born Creoles, clashed with peninsular officials over local affairs. The friction continued after Mexico’s independence from Spain as national officials gradually whittled away at the Ayuntamiento’s autonomy. And those same tensions lie at the heart of the twenty-first-century effort to transform the Federal District into a state with its own constitution—the campaign into which vendors in Tepito inserted themselves in 2016.²³ Baratilleros, in fact, found themselves at the center of debates over local autonomy many times over the centuries. Vendors in the market understood those intragovernmental rivalries and used them to their advantage by playing local and national officials against one another. Mexico City’s institutional dynamics played an important role

in the Baratillo's history, and understanding them is key to making sense of the market's persistence.²⁴

This study highlights the importance of municipal government, which often receives short shrift from historians. While national authorities developed the ambitious plans that draw most scholars' attention, local officials enacted many of the policies that had the greatest impact on people's lives. Municipal officials also had the most interaction with subjects and citizens. The Ayuntamiento was the principal vehicle through which vendors in the Baratillo expressed their grievances.²⁵ Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, baratilleros petitioned, lobbied, and collaborated with officials on the Ayuntamiento. They did not simply resist government attempts to regulate or quash their market; they used Mexico City's institutions to access the urban political arena and exert influence over government decision making.²⁶

URBAN POLITICS

The letter the vendors in Tepito sent to Mexico City's mayor in 2016 built on a long tradition of political engagement. Baratilleros had been political players in Mexico City since the colonial era. In the eighteenth century, they petitioned colonial authorities using the political vernacular of the day, asserting that their trade served the common good, and, during the Enlightenment, public utility. They were not pursuing ideological agendas with these efforts; rather, they were using the political tools available to them under the Spanish monarchy to protect or advance their material interests and assert their rights to the city.²⁷ After Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, vendors quickly adopted the political mechanisms that republican rule offered.²⁸ They demanded, as citizens and constituents, that local officials uphold their obligations to provide adequate policing and infrastructure for public markets. They lobbied elected officials on the Ayuntamiento for support when government initiatives endangered their businesses, and they threatened to vote uncooperative council members out of office. Vendors also engaged in the capital's emerging public sphere. In 1842, the baratilleros printed a combative letter to the Ayuntamiento in *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, the country's leading liberal newspaper of the era, seeking to gain public support in a dispute with the Ayuntamiento. They continued to use the press, forming alliances with sympathetic editors and publishers, throughout the

nineteenth century. They deftly navigated both the colonial and republican-era judicial systems.

In charting this course, the baratilleros benefited from important allies. Although critics of the Baratillo penned thousands of pages of diatribes about the market over the centuries, other residents of Mexico City, including elected officials and other members of the political elite, offered quieter but equally consistent support for the vendors. In nearly every controversy that engulfed the Baratillo, individuals raised their voices in defense of the baratilleros. Some had economic interests in the market. They may have owned a business in the Baratillo or a store nearby or had other financial dealings with baratilleros. In other cases, defending the Baratillo advanced a political agenda, as it did for Vicente García Torres, publisher of the newspaper *El Monitor Republicano*, who used the Baratillo as a poster child for the liberal principles of free trade and individual rights in the early 1870s. Baratilleros formed patronage networks that served the interests of elite, middling, and popular actors in the capital.²⁹

In other cases, the baratilleros' supporters had no obvious material motivation. Those individuals expressed a paternalistic sympathy for the downtrodden that extended even to vendors in the city's thieves' market. Although historians typically associate those sentiments with the consensual politics of the old regime, they did not disappear after Mexico's independence from Spain. Throughout the nineteenth century, government officials, newspaper editors, and other urban residents expressed a concern for the well-being of the baratilleros. These were attitudes that cut across partisan lines and continued throughout the Porfiriato, a period that scholars often identify with technocratic government and social Darwinism. In their petitions and letters to the press, vendors played to these sentiments. They stressed their poverty and vulnerability and chastised opponents for their callousness. Throughout the Baratillo's history, efforts to eliminate or further marginalize the market competed with these expressions of support, which the vendors themselves engendered.³⁰

This discourse of poverty, however, masks a more complicated social reality. Many of the vendors in the Baratillo were not, in fact, poor. Some operated substantial businesses. Many had backgrounds in the skilled trades, and, as a whole, they were relatively well educated.³¹ The nature of their trade, which skirted taxes and other regulatory hurdles, offered the potential for significant profit. Those factors, combined with the fact that baratilleros, unlike other street vendors, were predominately male, helped them gain access to Mexico's political arena.³² While many vendors sent petitions to

local and national authorities, only baratilleros seem to have succeeded in getting theirs published in the press in the nineteenth century. That they did so as early as the 1840s, a period when historians generally view the public sphere as restricted to the country's *letrados*, or lettered men, is extraordinary.³³ Other vendors did not have the same clout prior to the twentieth century.³⁴ This study reveals much about the lives of men and women who made their living on the streets of Mexico City. But it also tells a story that is unique to those who trafficked in the shadow economy.

Baratilleros' political tactics produced a remarkable record of nonviolent resolutions. Indeed, one of the most surprising aspects of the Baratillo's history is how infrequently tensions between vendors and government officials led to physical confrontations. Vendors were able to achieve their goals, or at least mitigate the negative effects of decisions that went against them, by negotiating with authorities. Their success in keeping the market in operation for centuries without resorting to violence may hold clues for understanding how, during eras when much of rural Mexico became embroiled in revolution, Mexico City largely avoided it.³⁵ The politics of the Mexico City street, where vendors in the thieves' market routinely bargained with local and national authorities, produced compromise far more often than conflict.

THE STREET

In uncovering the political and economic relationships that tied baratilleros to other actors in Mexico City, this book challenges traditional views about the role of public streets and plazas in Latin American society. Historians have long viewed streets and plazas as sites where modernizing elites clashed with recalcitrant popular groups—where the poor resisted, through protest or subtler strategies, elite attempts to assert control over public spaces that were essential to their work and social lives.³⁶ But the Baratillo's history suggests that a far wider swath of local residents engaged in Mexico City's street economies than the most vulnerable and that vendors did more than protest government policies they found problematic. Furthermore, the capital's governing elites rarely agreed on how to manage its public spaces. While imperial and national authorities wanted clean, orderly streets and plazas where troops could exercise, people and goods could move freely, and leaders could display their power for the public, members of the Ayuntamiento, which

depended on rent from the vendors who occupied those public spaces, often saw things differently. They defended the Ayuntamiento's jurisdiction over public markets, plazas, and thoroughfares against interference from higher authorities, which in some cases meant defending the baratilleros. The Baratillo's history provides little support for the idea that urban elites made a consistent or unified effort to eliminate elements of urban popular culture they found distasteful.³⁷

Nor were the baratilleros united in opposition to the government. Prior to the twentieth century, vendors in the market were loosely organized, if they were organized at all. There was no guild to create a common identity or common cause among the baratilleros, and no clear leadership structure.³⁸ Internal dissension was common, and competing vendor factions often sought help from government officials to gain advantage over their rivals within the market. Far from a site that drew neat battle lines between rich and poor, the Baratillo was a venue where elite, middling, and popular actors forged alliances that cut across class and ethnic lines.

If cross-class collaboration helped sustain the Baratillo, it did little to attack the underlying inequalities that created the market in the first place. The seventeenth-century Baratillo, like Tepito in the twenty-first century, was a place where men and women made their living on the street, at the law's margins, with few rights to protect their livelihoods. For hundreds of years, the Baratillo operated in this liminal state—tolerated, but never legal. The Tepito vendors' 2016 request for constitutional protection illustrates the precariousness of their trade and the contingent nature of their rights. The Baratillo's existence was always provisional—a negotiated arrangement that could come apart at any moment.³⁹

SOURCES

The shadow economy, by its very nature, leaves little behind for historians to study. Transactions take place off the books and outside the view of regulators and record keepers. But the Baratillo, as a public marketplace and a site that attracted frequent attention from authorities, left a paper trail. Over three hundred years, the market generated thousands of pages of government correspondence, vendor petitions, market censuses, travelers' accounts, newspaper articles, and notarial and judicial records. These sources provide an entry point for the study of individuals and economic exchanges that have

long eluded historians. Yet the window they open is frustratingly narrow, and it opens and shuts abruptly with changes to Mexico's institutional landscape. Guild records, for example, paint a vivid picture of the Baratillo's commerce during the eighteenth century. When the guilds lost their monopolies and their investigative authority in the early nineteenth century, however, that documentary trail goes cold. Newspapers and municipal market records fill its place, though inadequately. Indeed, although the extant documentation on the Baratillo provides a glimpse of Mexico City's shadow economy, much remains hidden from view. Quantitative data, beyond inconsistent registers of the rent the vendors paid to the city, are almost nonexistent. Apart from occasional references, there is little record of the prices vendors charged their customers, much less the volume of their sales. Demographic information about the market's vendors and customers is even more elusive.⁴⁰ What is evident, however, is that the Baratillo played an indispensable role in Mexico City's economy for centuries—providing jobs for vendors and basic household goods to consumers. The vendors turned that economic clout into political capital, ensuring that the black market never went out of business.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This book contains six chapters. The first three deal with the late colonial period, from the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, while chapters 4 through 6 examine the post independence era to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. This chronology challenges traditional periodizations in the historiography of Mexico and Latin America, which compartmentalize the colonial and national eras into separate fields of inquiry. The Baratillo's history resists such neat divisions. Both the Baratillo and the Ayuntamiento, the body charged with overseeing it, were colonial-era institutions that survived the transition from imperial to republican rule. The *longue-durée* approach of this study provides fresh insight into how nationhood and republican politics transformed old-regime institutions and the people who relied on them—and how they did not.⁴¹

Chapter 1, "A Pernicious Commerce," examines the efforts of New Spain's last Habsburg viceroys to eliminate the Baratillo in the late 1680s and 1690s, focusing on their response to the 1692 riot that ravaged the Plaza Mayor. Following the riot, Spanish authorities sought to reengineer the Plaza Mayor, forcing the Baratillo out and replacing it with a masonry *alcaicería*—later

known as the Parián—that was designed for the capital’s elite import merchants. The chapter explores why colonial authorities found the Baratillo so troubling, how they sought to eliminate it, and why that effort ultimately failed.

Chapter 2, “The Baratillo and the Enlightened City,” examines the Baratillo’s role in eighteenth-century reforms to Mexico City’s public administration and its built environment. While New Spain’s Bourbon rulers took a number of steps to transform the physical and social worlds of Mexico City’s poor, the government never targeted the Baratillo—a site that was synonymous with crime, license, and plebeian sociability. To understand this apparent contradiction, the chapter examines the politics of urban reform in eighteenth-century Mexico City, which saw royal, viceregal, and local authorities jostle for control over urban public spaces.

Chapter 3, “Shadow Economics,” moves from an analysis of elite debates over urban renewal policies to an examination of the quotidian transactions that took place in and around the Baratillo in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The shadow economy linked the baratilleros to some of Mexico’s elite overseas merchants while pitting them against the capital’s artisan guilds and shopkeepers, who saw them as disloyal competition. In reconstructing these relationships, the chapter reveals the centrality of the Baratillo’s commerce to the late-colonial urban economy. It also illustrates the ways that economics and politics intertwined in the market, as vendors pursued multiple strategies to protect their businesses from outside threats.

Chapter 4, “The Dictator, the Ayuntamiento, and the Baratillo,” takes readers into the national period with a focus on a largely forgotten urban renewal campaign that the nineteenth-century strongman Antonio López de Santa Anna and the Mexico City Ayuntamiento undertook in the early 1840s. Removing the Baratillo was central to Santa Anna’s ambitious, if short-lived, reform agenda. He encountered resistance, however, from baratilleros who pushed back by writing petitions and airing their grievances in the Mexico City press—decades before historians have found popular actors engaging in Mexico’s public sphere. The episode shows how the laws and the rhetoric of republicanism gave vendors new tools to defend their businesses against government policies that threatened them.

Chapter 5, “Free Trading in the Restored Republic,” focuses on an 1872 court case that divided vendors in the Baratillo and pitted them against the Mexico City Ayuntamiento. The case drew the attention of some of Mexico’s most prominent citizens, including Vicente García Torres, publisher of *El Monitor Republicano*, the leading newspaper of the era, and reached Mexico’s

Supreme Court, sparking a constitutional crisis. The case shows the improbable range of actors in Mexico City who had stakes in the Baratillo and the degree to which the market's vendors succeeded in turning a debate over its future into a national conversation about individual rights and the rule of law.

The sixth chapter, "Order, Progress, and the Black Market," examines the Baratillo's awkward fit within Porfirian Mexico City, when the country's autocratic president Porfirio Díaz sought to modernize the nation and its capital city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It focuses on the events that led to the Baratillo's relocation to the neighborhood of Tepito, in 1902. Facing the threat of the market's closure, the baratilleros bargained with the municipal government, reaching a compromise to move to Tepito—a location the vendors proposed themselves. The chapter contributes to recent scholarship that revises earlier depictions of the Porfiriato as a monolithic dictatorship, emphasizing instead the multiple ways that Mexico's government and citizens maintained a tense and unequal peace for more than thirty years.

The epilogue, "The Baratillo and Tepito," briefly traces the intertwined histories of the Baratillo and the neighborhood of Tepito in the twentieth century. Like many other decisions regarding the Baratillo, its move to Tepito was supposed to be temporary. Yet the market remained, and over the decades it grew into a sprawling marketplace for second-hand, stolen, contraband, and pirated goods that consumed the neighborhood. By the middle of the century, Mexico City newspapers rarely referred to the Baratillo by name; instead, they used the same disparaging language that observers had traditionally employed to describe the Baratillo for the neighborhood itself. Today, Tepito is the most famous *barrio* in Mexico, with a distinctive oppositional identity that is inextricably tied to its role as the epicenter of Mexico City's black market.