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**Gender, Violence, and Piety: Performance of  
Masculinity in Colonial Potosí**

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the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in  
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## ABSTRACT

The Imperial Villa of Potosí since its inception was a unique place. The enormous wealth produced by the silver mines created a peculiar environment in which a heterogenous, ethnically diverse group of men congregated in search of a share of that bonanza. Those men that made Potosí their temporary home displayed an also unique form of masculinity defined by the contrasting aspects of violence and piety. This dissertation centers on the performance of such masculinity and how it was performed in Colonial Potosí. I argue that three main characteristics displayed by male Potosinos --violent behavior, piety, and gender relations--were brought about by the Imperial Villa's particular circumstances: a) isolation in harsh physical conditions; b) immense wealth; c) large diverse population.

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## INTRODUCTION

If I were to pay you, Sancho, --replied Don Quijote -- in line with the greatness and nobleness that this remedy deserves, not even the treasures of Venice or the mines of Potosí, would be enough to compensate you.”<sup>1</sup>

### THE SHINY CITY UPON A MOUNTAIN

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Potosí became home to a heterogeneous, ethnically diverse group of men. Indigenous people came from different parts of Perú in forced migration to work in the mines, Africans were brought to work in the cities and related mining businesses, Spaniards of all standings in society and from different regions in Spain also came to take advantage of the silver rush, a deluge of men from other European countries, and an array of adventurers and vagabonds also poured into Potosí. According to historian Lewis Hanke, the *Villa* became the biggest melting pot in the Spanish empire.<sup>2</sup> This peculiar environment contained a different kind of men --compared to other places in Spanish Colonial America-- men who were performing a different type of hyper masculinity. Potosí was home to an abundance of men who were openly identifiable with an overwhelming pattern of violent behavior, brushing aside considerations of decorum, property, law and order.

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, (Real Academia Española, 2004), 1084. (Unless noted, all translations in this Dissertation are my own).

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela's History of Potosí*. (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), 42. This is a separate tome included with the *Historia* 3 volumes when it was published in 1965. Henceforth: *Bartolomé Arzáns*.

This dissertation will focus then on that masculinity and how it was performed in colonial Potosí, focusing in three main characteristics observed about men in Potosí: their violent behavior, their piety, and their relationship with women. Potosí has been described many times as a city of deep contrasts; the same can be said to describe its male citizens.

My investigation will focus on how men, mostly *Criollos* and *Peninsulares*, in Potosí performed masculinity before women and other men and how two apparently contradictory aspects of their behavior, piety and violence, were displayed openly, seemingly reinforced by the peculiar environment in which three distinct factors were intrinsic to the city: a) isolation in harsh physical conditions; b) immense wealth produced by the silver mines; c) large population living in cramped dwellings. These factors, I argue, contributed to the construction of a particular kind of masculinity in Potosí and also influenced hetero-normative ideas about masculinity. Violent masculinity in colonial Latin America was not a rarity; in fact, it was almost the standard. Historian Matthew Restall explains how different circumstances since the discovery of America and everything that followed, such as the wars of conquest and combatting the indigenous peoples and their religious beliefs, was infused with violent behavior.<sup>3</sup> However, the three mentioned factors created a unique microcosm in Potosí, in which violence was exacerbated. Very little investigation has been carried out by historians on the area of masculine

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew Restall, "Legitimized Violence in Colonial Spanish America", chapter in *The Cambridge world history of violence, Volume III*, Eds. Robert J. Antony, Stuart Carroll, Caroline Dodds Pennock, 408-426. (Cambridge University Press: 2020).

performance in colonial Potosí; therefore, my study would be a much-needed contribution to the history of the period, since the study of masculinity is a fairly new field of inquiry for Colonial Latin America.

### The Imperial Villa of Potosí

In colonial times, Potosí was part of the Viceroyalty of Perú, an area that was known as Alto Perú or Charcas. In 1776, Potosí became part of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata; today Potosí is in the country of Bolivia, and the city is one of the highest in the world (13,000 ft.). The *Cerro* (small mountain) of Potosí (standing at 16,000 ft.) and its silver mines were a source of enormous wealth for the Spanish crown. Silver mining began in Potosí in 1545, and it eventually became the richest silver lode in the world. With the help of the indigenous population, who had been mining in different areas of the Inca Empire prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, and because the silver ores were so rich, the production was kept high for almost twenty years. After that, it became obvious that to keep the same level of production, more labor and better extraction techniques were necessary. The first problem was solved by the adoption of the *Mita* system of compulsory labor, which offered the necessary number of indigenous people to work in the mines, and the second one by the introduction of mercury in the smelting process, which helped to keep the production at high levels. However, by mid seventeenth-century, silver production was dwindling, and prosperity began to decline in Potosí. Decaying infrastructure and falling yields created social tensions in Potosí, mainly the civil wars among

different factions over control of the *Villa* and the mining operations.<sup>4</sup> Life at such an altitude, well above the *Puna* (high plateau in the Andes), was harsh for the inhabitants of the city and its surroundings. Life conditions were bleak because Potosí was a hostile natural environment, deprived of any vegetation, with extremely cold temperatures and strong winds and high altitude, to which Europeans were not accustomed. Historian R. C. Padden states that for several decades after its foundation in 1545, children of European descent, born in Potosí, were not able to survive early infancy.<sup>5</sup> Gregorio de Robles, who travelled through Spanish America in the last portion of the seventeenth century, described also how the harsh environment affected births: “It is also true that women who conceive must go to give birth eight leagues away, where there is a settlement, or ravine, with some 100 residents, called the Old Mine of San Antonio, with a more benign climate.”<sup>6</sup>

After the discovery of the rich silver veins in the Potosí Mountain, the initial number of Spaniards in the city, 4,000 in 1555, grew rapidly to 12,000 in 1557. In 1572, there were 120,000 inhabitants including Africans, mestizos, and natives.<sup>7</sup> In 1611, around 160,000 people lived in Potosí --3,000 *Peninsulares*, 40,000 non-Spanish Europeans,<sup>8</sup> 35,000 *criollos* (including mestizos), 76,000 natives, and 6,000

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, 1573-1700: Compulsory Indian Labor in the Andes*. (Stanford University Press, 1985), 8-9, 50.

<sup>5</sup> R. C. Padden, *Tales of Potosí*, (Providence: Brown University Press, 1975), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Gregorio de Robles, *América a fines del siglo XVII: Noticia de lugares de contrabando*, ed. Víctor Tau Anzoátegui, (Valladolid: Casa Museo de Colón, 1980), 52-53, in Lane, *Potosí*, 149.

<sup>7</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Mostly Portuguese, Flemish, English, and French. There is mention also of some Dutch, German, Italian, Irish and Polish, *Historia*, I, cxlv, cxlvi.

Afro-Bolivians and mulattos-- making it the largest city in the Americas at the time.<sup>9</sup> The population in Potosí was fluid, because of the possibility of making a prosperous living working in the mines or the many related business --azogueros, refiners-- and in the service/market businesses that provided the essentials and much more to the rich *Potosinos*.<sup>10</sup> Foreigners constantly came to the *Villa* from all over the world; there was also a large numbers of *forasteros*, indigenous people who abandoned their traditional villages and migrated to Potosí. They usually moved among rural communities seeking work as sharecroppers, trading in the markets, and transporting goods. Some worked as wage laborers in the mines.<sup>11</sup>

The working conditions in the mines were harsh and dangerous. The miners endured long hours of work, sweating in the dark, breathing toxic fumes from smoke, mold, and dust, all of which, compounded with poor diet, caused severe health problems. Moving around the mine tunnels and coming up the surface carrying heavy loads was also the cause of endless accidents where miners got seriously injured or fell to their death.<sup>12</sup> The mines were owned mostly by Europeans, but there were also some owned by Native Americans and free people of African descent. Women lived and worked around the mining camps and in the *Villa*, providing services to the miners --food, clothing, and cleaning.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 36.

<sup>10</sup> *Azogueros* was a term used to describe the mill and mine owners that used *azogue* (mercury) which proved to be a better way to process silver at a lower cost. From Cole's *The Potosí Mita*.

<sup>11</sup> Ann. M. Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change: The Forasteros of Cuzco, 1570-1720*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Padden, *Tales of Potosí*, xix-xx.

<sup>13</sup> Kris Lane, *Potosí, The Silver City that Changed the World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 33, 65.

Daily life in Potosí was harsh, but the city also offered its inhabitants a multi-faceted lifestyle. Potosí housed abundant, unlimited wealth, and with such wealth came corruption, violence, and decadence. Wealth was conspicuously displayed in Potosí. Historian Bartolomé Arzáns, trying to depict the grandness of his hometown and the achievements of his fellow *criollos*, described how *Potosinos*, dressed in lavish clothes, attended the many *fiestas*, festivities, civic or religious, that were frequently organized in the *Villa* with parades, and sponsored bullfighting and traditional horse games where the *criollo* men could display their prowess. These *fiestas*, even during the harsh times in the city due to the decline in the silver production, were opulent affairs: “processions were grander, bullfights were bigger and better, everything was done more lavishly.”<sup>14</sup> *Criollos* felt they were being treated with condescension by the *Peninsulares*; therefore, they displayed their accomplishments during any kind of public celebrations, to demonstrate that they were equal to Iberian-born Spaniards.<sup>15</sup> Public exhibition of riches was a permanent fixture of life in Potosí where wealthy miners “spent more than a Viceroy or grandee of Spain.”<sup>16</sup> Even churches housed lavish artifacts made with the silver from the mines. Kris Lane states that “the *iglesia mayor* fine silver lamps included one weighing over 200 lbs.”<sup>17</sup> Churches and homes of rich *Potosinos* who wanted to showcase their wealth displayed splendid works of art. Two of the most famous

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<sup>14</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Leonardo García Pabón, “Indios, Criollos y Fiesta Barroca en ‘La Historia de Potosí’ de Bartolomé Arzáns.” *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 61, Issue 172-173, December, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 95.

painters of the time belonged to the “Potosí School of Painting”, they were the *criollos*, Melchor Pérez de Olguín and Gaspar Miguel de Berrio.<sup>18</sup> This Andean school of artistic expression centered on Baroque religious imagery.

High in the Andes, virtually inaccessible, *Potosí* was almost a universe of its own, separated by distance and laxness of social rules and traditions from the rest of the world.<sup>19</sup> The city was not carefully planned at its founding because the Spaniards thought the silver mines would stop producing sooner rather than later. The result was crooked streets, hidden and dark plazas, gloomy houses. *Potosí* was a city of abundance and excesses when the production was high, and of decay and adversity when the production stopped. In this isolated city, made of harsh nature and unlimited riches, this place of contrast and challenges, the *Villa Imperial de Potosí* was born.<sup>20</sup>

Over four chapters, this dissertation explores how masculinity was performed in *Potosí*, with a central aim of emphasizing how the location and peculiar characteristics of this colonial mining town conditioned such performance. I begin by providing an overview of general considerations about gender relations,

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<sup>18</sup> Olguín was born in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1665 and died in *Potosí* in 1724; many of his works are displayed today in the *Potosí Mita Museum*, in Lane, *Potosí*, 155.

Berrio, a native of *Potosí* (c. 1706-, c. 1762) , wanted --like Arzáns-- to celebrate the glory and stature of his hometown. For more on Berrio and his work see: Pilar María Díaz’s “Gaspar Miguel de Berrio and the *Potosí* School of Painting: Defining his role and importance in the *Potosí* School of Painting,” PhD Dissertation, George Washington University, Department of Art History-Latin American History, 2002 and, *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Perú and Bolivia*. Center of Inter-American Relations, New York, November 12, 1985, to February 10, 1986. John Stringer, director; Barbara Duncan, Guest Curator; Teresa Gisbert, Guest Curator.

<sup>19</sup> For distances and conditions of colonial roads in Perú, see pages 5 and 6 in Chapter One of this Dissertation.

<sup>20</sup> For *Potosí* and its mines today, see Lane, *Potosí*, 194-96.

violence and piety, and discussing the extent of the influence that all of them had in the performance of masculinity in the *Villa Imperial de Potosí*.

### Theoretical Considerations

#### a. Masculinity and Gender Relations

Gender constructions are present in every social group. Gender does not only refer to the differences between female and male, but also to expectations, roles, and interactions, and it is also a social category linked to sexuality, power, resources, labor, and social structures. When we examine gender, we seek to ascertain how such concepts are constructed in society, how we define and understand gender, and what it signified in the past. Joan W. Scott says that her article “Gender” opened a whole set of analytic questions about how and under what conditions different roles and functions had been defined for each sex. She also discusses how the very meanings of the categories “man” and “woman” varied according to time, context, and place.”<sup>21</sup> Sueann Caulfield states that it is important to include men in analyzing gender because “...gender is a broader analytical category that includes consideration of how female and male subjects are socially constructed and positioned and how representations of femininity and masculinity structure institutional power.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec. 1986), “Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis”, *Diogenes* 57(1), (October 2010), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Caulfield, Susan. “The History of Gender in Historiography of Latin America”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 81: 3-4, (2001), 454.

In any given society, gender is conceptualized in a biological sense and as a social construction, shaped by cultural expectations regarding what is the proper behavior for men and women who are said to perform roles according to those expectations. Pre-Hispanic gender roles in the Andean region were framed by concepts of parallelism and complementarity, ideas that men and women occupied separate but equivalent spheres and carried out different roles that complemented each other. After the Conquest, the impact of the European culture over the Andean culture caused a slow transformation in the political and religious organization of the Inca society with eventually profound changes in indigenous gender roles and gender relations. It was “an encounter between peoples who held dissimilar beliefs about what it meant to be a woman and what it meant to be a man.”<sup>23</sup>

Iberian society was ruled by a patriarchal system, a system that the *conquistadores* and those who followed them brought to America. This system was deeply entrenched in the structure of the colonial institutions, including the family, which was tightly ruled by men who had complete legal power --*patria potestad*-- over their households, women, and children. This power, originating in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century *Siete Partidas*, was at the core of the legal philosophy in the Spanish colonial era, allowing men to have a position of authority designed to perpetuate a patriarchal social structure.<sup>24</sup> The concept of patriarchy was a fundamental component of the colonizing project in which only men --in the government, the

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<sup>23</sup> Karen Vieira Powers, *Women in the Crucible of Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500-1600* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Nora E. Jaffary and Jane E. Mangan, eds. *Women in Colonial Latin America, 1526-1806: Texts and Contexts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2018), xxii.

army and the Church-- hold absolute power over society, not just their families, but also over the inhabitants of the newly-conquered lands in America.

At the core of the patriarchal system was gender hetero-normativity, the concept of two genders --male and female-- that implied that heterosexuality and defined gender roles were the norm. Anything outside that binary definition would theoretically be considered unnatural and deviant from the norm. In an ideal patriarchal colonial society, men were expected to fulfill their roles in the public sphere; positions of power in society were reserved for men either in the military, the church, commerce, etc., and above all, as rulers of their family units. Women, conversely, ideally performed their roles in the private spheres of their homes, raising children, taking care of the house, and managing the servants.

Raewyn Connell argues that there is not a single, unified definition of masculinity present in generalized form in all cultures around the world, but rather there are multiple masculinities within a given society. There is, however, a hegemonic masculinity in which different masculinities are constructed in the diverse echelons of society, which establish different identities for those men in positions of power and those in subordinate positions. The social constructionist's theory posits that masculinity is not a fixed identity, but instead it is constructed, and that gender construction is an ongoing characteristic.<sup>25</sup> In their books, David H. J. Morgan and Victor J. Seidler also support the idea of multiple patterns of masculinity, which are found in different and diverse sociocultural environments,

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<sup>25</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995), 77, 141-45.

and they argue that men and masculinities are social constructions. They also share the opinion that the study of men and masculinity is strongly connected to inequalities of power. Morgan states: "... patriarchy is both about the domination of men over women and some men over other men, and about the relationships between these two sets of dominations."<sup>26</sup> Seidler continues with the subject of domination, making the connection between the language of reason and power being "appropriated as the exclusive possession of men. Women could share in this world, but only if they were ready to subordinate their individual needs to serving the needs of men."<sup>27</sup>

The essays in Michael Kimmel's *Changing Men* also support the idea of social construction of gender and the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Kimmel talks about an era of transition in the definition of masculinity because new male roles -- men expressing their feelings freely, for instance-- are different from the old, traditional ones, with the father as provider and disciplinarian in the family, for instance. He argues that these new and old roles do not cancel each other; instead, they coexist. With these shifting roles there is also a change in the examination of men and masculinities. Men's studies, Kimmel says "takes masculinity as its problematic, and seeks to explore men's experience as men, not in some social roles."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> David H. J. Morgan, *Discovering Men* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 202.

<sup>27</sup> Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1989), 16.

<sup>28</sup> Michael S. Kimmel. "Rethinking 'Masculinity', New Directions on Research" in *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, edited by Kimmel, (California: Sage Publications, 1987), 9-12.

M. Sinha examines the formulation/structure of the male role and the connection of gender and imperialism. She argues that such justification must be studied in two ways. The first is to understand the “radical difference of the native society” and its implied necessity to control it; the second one is to see the colonial project as a “civilizing mission.”<sup>29</sup> We see the same pattern of colonial domination by the Spanish in America, where Conquistadors and Catholic priests needed to subjugate and control the native population to make their colonizing enterprise flourish. Spanish men who had the advantage of their military training and powerful weapons sought --not always successfully-- total control over the indigenous people; even the conversion to Christianity was coercive.

The study of masculinity also explores how and why it is performed: either to assert a man’s standing in the community, or to protect and defend his or his family’s reputation. In Colonial Latin America masculinity had to be performed and proved, on a daily basis, not just privately but mainly in public. Men could take their grievances to the courts or resort to violence to defend any attack to their masculinity or to the honor of their family or community. Geoffrey Spurling speaks of “masculine posturing” in the history of the nephew of a man accused of homosexual activities; the nephew wants to make sure he publicly shows disapproval of such behavior indicating he is ready to take arms against his uncle,

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<sup>29</sup> Mrinalini Sinha. “Gender and Imperialism: Colonial Policy and the Ideology of Moral Imperialism in Late Nineteenth-Century Bengal” in Kimmel’s *Changing Men*, 229.

even murder him.<sup>30</sup> Steve J. Stern discusses the importance of keeping masculinity and honor, for the individual and also for his social group or community. He argues that men carried out serious aggressions and assaults and that such acts were permitted and accepted, actually “demanded” to protect their masculinity. Appearances had to be kept and, sometimes, situations “spiraled out of control.”<sup>31</sup>

b. Masculinity in Historical Context in Spain

Medievalists Cullum and Lewis state that, as regards to religious and clerical masculinity, scholarship shows there was a need, in the aftermath of the Gregorian reforms in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, to implement changes regarding the issue of celibacy in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In an aim to ensure male control of the Church, its leaders decided that women should not have preeminence in its hierarchy; many female saints were being worshiped, and if the priests were allowed to marry or live in concubinage, those women could also exert influence over them, which could have translated into ecclesiastical interference. As positive as the idea of denying women any formal participation in the Church business might have seemed to those clerics, bishops, etc., this exclusion also affected them

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<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Spurling. “Honor, Sexuality, and the Colonial Church” in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, edited by Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 59.

<sup>31</sup> Steve, J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995), 184-85.

personally because celibacy was imposed on them, which in fact meant control over their bodies too.<sup>32</sup>

Masculinity experienced changes in Spain between sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The decline of the Spanish Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was not the only factor behind a crisis of masculinity in the period. Shifra Armon states that “ambivalences and uncertainties that dogged Spain’s imperial adventures gave rise to a sense of belatedness and frustrations.” Spanish heroes from classic chivalric works who had symbolized the masculine ideal were no longer occupying those stages. Military men, who until then had been displaying the recognized attributes of manliness, virility, and valor, needed instead to reinvent themselves and adapt to the new circumstances in society, which required them to perform masculinity using a different set of skills in a different sociopolitical environment.<sup>33</sup>

In colonial Spanish America, where the Catholic Church exerted a powerful influence in society, it meant that the performance of masculinity was connected to the display of Catholic piety. Religious orders held positions of power in the Spanish colonies, as it happened for instance with the Jesuits in the Viceroyalty of Nueva España where that power was enhanced by the wealth they amassed for donations.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> P. H. Cullum and Katharine J. Lewis, Eds. *Religious Men, and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), 1-15.

<sup>33</sup> Shifra Armon, *Masculine Virtue in Early Modern Spain*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 24.

<sup>34</sup> Stephanie Kirk, “Palafox contra los Jesuitas: Masculinidad y escándalo epistolar en la Nueva España”, *Perífrasis: Revista de Literatura, Teoría, y Crítica*, Vol. 13, No. 25, Enero-Julio 2022, pp. 141-158. Juan de Palafox was Bishop and Viceroy of Nueva España in mid 1600s.

Men had a constant and central presence in Potosí history. Potosino men such as members of the Church, government officials, military officers, wealthy miners, the members of the different factions of Spanish men, in almost all cases, appear to be invariably performing revenge and/or reparations, always trying to solve disputes with armed conflicts and extreme violence, together with performing pious acts. Descriptions of male behavior in Potosí show men acting violently and ruthlessly in the public sphere to defend their property, position, and, above all, their personal honor and that of their family. The wealth available and displayed at Potosí was immense. Greed and corruption would inevitably arise, creating and destroying alliances between the different factions in the city (Andalusians, Basques, Extremadurans, etc.) who were constantly engaged in civil wars to achieve power and control over the city and its riches.

### Methodology and Sources

My study will focus on the performance of masculinity by Spanish and *Criollo* men in colonial Potosí. I will primarily analyze all the historical accounts (around 500) in the three volumes of the *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* (1545-1737) which depict male behavior in a variety of ways. This comprehensive work is a foundational text for historians writing about colonial Bolivia and Perú. Its author, Arzáns, provided a detailed eyewitness account of the time and the place, making the *Historia* a rich, historical source for my present undertaking since it is an invaluable tool for analysis. No historical work on Potosí could be complete without

this unequalled work. *The Historia* is comparable to other colonial texts such as the *Codex Mendoza*, and Bernardino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex*,<sup>35</sup> and also Jacinto de la Serna's *Tratado de Idolatrías*,<sup>36</sup> which had often been at the center of studies about the colonial period in Spanish America.<sup>37</sup> Lewis Hanke describing the significance of the *Historia*'s content states:

"It was a new, inclusive kind of history --not the history of a conquistador or an ecclesiastic, a royal official or a miner asking for favors from the crown. Thus, the spirit in which Arzáns recounted the history of the past century and a half was distinctive. He was a Spaniard born in the New World, called a *criollo* or Creole, to distinguish himself from the *Chapetón*, or Spaniard newly arrived in América, and he told his story as one who had spent all his life in the isolated Silver city. Arzáns' father and grandparents had come from Spain, and he was obviously glad to associate himself with Spain's achievements in the Indies. But he was also an American, critical of some Spanish actions and attitudes, and keenly aware that persons born in Perú were somehow different from Peninsular Spaniards."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *The Codex Mendoza* (1542) is an Aztec text, which contains the history of the Aztec civilization and its conquest. It was written at the request of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza to report to the Spanish Crown about all things related to the Conquest.

*The General history of the things of Nueva España (Florentine Codex)* is an extensive historical and ethnographic study of Mesoamerican culture. Its author, Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590) was a Spanish Franciscan Friar.

<sup>36</sup> *Tratado de las idolatrías, supersticiones, hechicerías y otras costumbres de las razas aborígenes de México* by Jacinto de la Serna (1597-1661). This work intended to present a comprehensive detail of how the indigenous people practiced their religion, with the intention of developing the most effective way of leading them to accept Catholicism. Jacinto de la Serna served as *Visitador* (inspector) of the Archbishop of Mexico and as president of the Santa María de Todos los Santos College and the Real y Pontífica Universidad of Mexico.

<sup>37</sup> *The Codexes Mendoza and Florentine*, and *Tratado of Idolatrías* have served as sources of several studies that depend heavily on these documents such as Viviana Díaz Balsera *Guardians of Idolatry: gods, demons, and priests in Hernando Ruíz de Alarcón's treatise on the heathen superstitions* (2018), and *The Pyramid under the Cross: Franciscan Discourse of Evangelization and the Nahuatl Christian Subject in Sixteenth-century Mexico* (2005); Caroline Dodds Pennock *On Savage Shores: How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe* (2023), *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle, and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture* (2011); Guamán Poma de Ayala *El primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1600-1615); Juan Bautista Lastres Quiñones, *Medicina Aborígen Peruana* (1943), *Historia de la Medicina Peruana: La Medicina en el Virreynato* (1951), *La Medicina en el Descubrimiento y Conquista del Perú* (1956); Lisa Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth: The Festivals of Colonial Latin America Mining Towns* (2016).

<sup>38</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 12.

My analysis will also include other contemporary accounts of Potosí, and other published primary archival materials. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions on travel, it was impossible to visit archives in Bolivia and Spain.

The contemporary travelers who wrote extensively about Potosí include those of José de Acosta (1539-1600), who was a Spanish Jesuit missionary who travelled in Perú including the Potosí area and wrote works on natural and moral history. Antonio de la Calancha (1584-1654), a Spanish Augustinian friar, chronicler, and historian of colonial Perú, who was born in Sucre, Bolivia and lived all his life in colonial Perú. Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566), Spanish priest, historian, and social reformer. Pedro Cieza de León (1520-1554), who was a Spanish *Conquistador* and chronicler of Perú. Diego Fernández, Spanish historian and adventurer. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), chronicler of the history of the Incas in Perú.<sup>39</sup>

One of the ways in which I will examine why and how Spanish and *Criollo* men performed masculinity in Potosí will center on their often reckless, violent behavior, a point that almost always appears in the comments of chroniclers and visitors to the *Villa*. Colonial Potosí was in fact a world of men engaged in continuous fights, duels, and brawls, again and again solving disputes with armed

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<sup>39</sup> José de Acosta, *De natura novi orbis*, Salamanca, 1588. Antonio de la Calancha, *Crónica Moralizada de la Orden de San Agustín en el Perú*, Tomo primero, Barcelona, 1638, Tomo segundo, Lima, 1653. Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*, Sevilla, 1552, and *Historia de las Indias*, 1561, Edición de Agustín Millares Carlo y estudio preliminar de Lewis Hanke, 3 Tomos, Mexico, 1951. Pedro Cieza de León, *Parte Primera de la Crónica del Perú*, Sevilla, 1553. Diego Fernández [el Palentino], *Primera y Segunda Parte de la Historia del Perú*, Sevilla, 1571. Garcilaso de la Vega [el Inca], *Historia general del Perú*, Córdoba, 1616. *Segunda parte de los Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, Lisboa, 1609.

warfare. The diverse composition in the population of the *Villa* originated deep divisions among the different factions, with the consequent group identification and rivalry. Notwithstanding the rampant violence, male *Potosinos* were also displaying religious devotion and piety. The good-natured, Christian-spirited of the people of Potosí as a whole, even during hard economic times, found it in their hearts to help the poor and donate money for their churches; this gave the opportunity for elite men in the *Villa* to demonstrate their Christian values, establishing themselves as “hombres de bien”, not just wealthy but also honorable. Wealth, the incredible amount of money that could be made in the silver mines was always at the center of any activity or event in Potosí.

Also, we should keep in mind that *Potosinos* related their piety to a repeated cycle of the sin-punishment-penance: the sins of greed, lust, violence, etc. that plagued the *Villa*. God’s punishment for those transgressions, and the penance that the city as a whole had to perform in search of atonement, took the form of private and public demonstrations of piety such as donations, processions, masses, novenas, etc. The possibility of wealth was what made people in Potosí become greedy, wickedly ambitious, and it even dictated how and why alms should be given as reparations for their sinful behavior.

Also, my examination of masculinity will include Potosí men’s attitude towards women by discussing gender relations in Chapter Two. Male *Potosinos* had the same mind-set towards women that was traditionally held in the Iberian Peninsula, meaning that the patriarchal system would rule over their households

and especially their female family members. The idea was that women were weak and not trustworthy because they could easily let their sexuality rule their lives in an unhinged way, which in turn would damage their reputation and by extension the reputation of their whole family. It would be then up to the male relatives to make sure that women stay in their safe and expected place, the home. The culture of honor will also be considered in gender relations because it worked hand-in-hand with the patriarchal system. "Public honor was enormously important for the private lives of colonial men and women," indicates Elizabeth Kuznesof. For an elite unmarried woman, pregnancy would be punished by "private exile and seclusion."<sup>40</sup>

The virtue of women should be preserved at all times so as to avoid bringing shame into the family. Mary Elizabeth Perry states that the Counter Reformation ideology during the Early Modern Period influenced gender beliefs. The Catholic Church supported and spread the idea that women were "especially vulnerable to temptations of the devil"; the solution for that was to use the "enclosure and purity" method not just to protect the tenets of the Church but also the social order in society.<sup>41</sup>

## Historiography

### a.General History -Andean Region, Mining, Ethnic Groups

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Kuznesof, "The House, the Street and the Brothel: Gender in Latin American History," *History of Women in the Americas* 1:1 (April 2012)21, 25.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender, and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*, (Princeton University Press, 1990), 6.

To better understand how Perú and in particular Potosí became a center of power and wealth for the Spaniards, it is necessary to learn about the land and people that the *conquistadores* found when they arrived in America, the effect of the new culture and institutions the European brought with them, and how they imposed those social structures on the indigenous population. The two main indigenous nations in the area of Potosí were the Aymara (largest) and the Quechua. At the time of the discovery of silver, Potosí had a population of around 3,000 natives; by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the native population grew to more than 70,000.

Scholarship for this period of Andean history is ample and varied. Several books focus on Inca history, the conquest and its effect on the indigenous population, and the culture and religion in the region. Due to the fact that the seat of the Viceroyalty of Perú was in Lima, most of the works that use the word “Andean” as reference are mostly centered on Lima or Cuzco, the latter being the former capital of the Inca Empire and an important center of the Spanish government in the region. The following books are excellent sources for understanding how Inca society was constructed before the encounter with the Europeans, how it was transformed by the new institutions brought by the Spaniards, and how the intersection of those two cultures created the *mestizos*. Kenneth J. Andrien contributes to the understanding of the creation of the Inca Empire, and how after the conquest the new rulers imposed changes that would deeply impact the natives’ culture and economy. Although those changes deeply affected all areas of native

society, indigenous people were nonetheless able to resist/accommodate the new cultural, social, and political values imposed on them. As an example, he cites how the Christian and indigenous religions mixed, evolving into something that was “neither completely European nor Andean.”<sup>42</sup> Christine Hunefeldt’s book is a comprehensive history of Perú, since the Pre-Inca civilizations up to the present time. It also includes several chapters on the Conquest, the establishment of colonial power and institutions, and the effects of the Bourbon reforms.<sup>43</sup>

James Lockhart, one of the leading historians of Colonial Latin America, created a classic in which he emphasizes the participants in the colonization of Perú and the new society formed after the Conquest. He uses several case studies to describe the newly created positions that Spaniards occupied in America: *encomenderos*, merchants, and artisans. He points out that there were similarities between the Spanish conquest of the Americas and other global conquests such as Arab, Roman, British. He states: “People came looking for opportunities in general, often meaning to strike it rich quickly and return home, but usually in the end spent their whole lives in the new country, or only returned to live out their retirement. Spanish Perú had mining booms, it was a melting pot of regions and nationalities. In these and many other ways it fits into the general history of migration and settlement.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Kenneth J. Andrien, *Andean Worlds: Indigenous History, Culture and Consciousness under Spanish Rule, 1532-1825* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Christine Hunefeldt, *A Brief History of Perú* (San Diego: University of California, 2004).

<sup>44</sup> James Lockhart, *Spanish Perú, 1532-1560: A Social History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 265.

Both Frederick P. Bowser and Rachel Sarah O'Toole focus, not on the European population of colonial Perú, but on the Andean and African communities. Both books show how these two groups had been mostly assigned to work either in menial jobs (Africans) or in the silver mines (Andeans). According to Bowser, although the largest population of African slaves in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Americas were in Perú, the majority of them were found in the coastal areas, with just a small number working in the mines in the highland region. The labor force in the mines came mostly from the indigenous population, whose presence in the agricultural areas was replaced by African slaves. However, when the native population declined in the early 1600s, the African slaves were needed to work in the mines, until the Spanish Crown decided to install the *Mita* system again. Bowser states that, contrary to scholarship that indicates Spanish America was more tolerant of slavery than British America, there are extensive examples of violent interaction between slaveholders and slaves in the Andean region, where corporal punishment was widespread.<sup>45</sup> Also, he stresses another difference between the two slave systems in the Americas: in the Spanish colonies there was an abundant supply of native labor, especially after the introduction of the *Mita* in the mining Andean regions.<sup>46</sup>

O'Toole examines how the Spaniards saw the two racial groups --Africans and Andeans-- regarding their ability to perform hard labor, and how the Europeans

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<sup>45</sup> Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Perú, 1524-1650* (Stanford University Press, 1974), 231-34.

<sup>46</sup> Bowser, *The African Slave*, 19.

attached pre-conceived ideas to each of those two groups: the indigenous people were weak and innocent, and the Africans were associated with the devil and more difficult to control. Her study examines the making of race categories in colonial Perú in the organization of the *casta* system, arguing that her book “disrupts a common assumption that contemporary racism originated in an unbroken line from the colonial past.” Instead, she argues that “*casta* categories provided important points of leverage but did not inexorably freeze one’s status. By using the colonial categories that bound them and others, Andeans and Africans engaged in remaking colonialism and slavery and in the process helped make what we would come to know as race.”<sup>47</sup>

Ann Zulawski examines the indigenous labor force who worked mostly in the mines of the Andean region. She focuses on the Oruro silver mines, arguing the working conditions were different from Potosí. In Oruro, indigenous population came from villages close by, and they were paid wages. “Its workers were not directly coerced” she claims, adding that the proximity of the mines to the villages allowed native workers to keep close ties with their communities.<sup>48</sup>

Perú has always been, and is today, rich with mineral deposits of copper, gold, lead, tin, and silver. Mining in general, and the Potosí famous silver mines in particular, have been the project of numerous scholarly investigations. Peter Wakewell argues that although the indigenous population was forced to work in the

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<sup>47</sup> Rachel Sarah O’Toole, *Bound Lives: Africans, Indians, and the Making of Race in Colonial Perú*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 170.

<sup>48</sup> Ann Zulawski, *They Eat from Their Labor: Work and Social Change in Colonial Bolivia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 7-8.

mines, following the creation of the *Mita* system, under dangerous, unhealthy circumstances, some miners were able to negotiate better working conditions.<sup>49</sup>

Enrique Tandeter focuses on the silver boom that happened in the late colonial period. Forced labor was still the norm for extracting the silver, but at such time, he argues, a great part of the workers were not *mitayos* (*Mita* miners) but *mingas* (free workers) and *kajchas* (self-employed workers). The inclusion of these last two groups increased the number of workers available and allowed *mitayos* to have shorter conscription time.<sup>50</sup>

Jeffrey A. Cole's book on the Potosí *Mita* is an outstanding examination of this system of forced labor, which, in fact, was not created by the Spaniards; they simply adapted the *Mita* structure that existed during the Inca Empire. The only difference was the ideology behind it: in pre-colonial times the *Mita* was instituted to have the population "donate" its labor for the benefit of the empire to which the workers were connected, not just by the idea of employer/employee but by bonds of culture and religion. On the other hand, the Andeans were only a labor force for the Spaniards and their European empire.<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, the *Mita* with its rotating working schedule created disruption in the lives of individuals and their native communities; often, large groups of people with no villages to return to became *forasteros*, indigenous people who were not part of a community and drifted from

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain. Indian Labor in Potosí, 1545-1650* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> Enrique Tandeter, *Coercion and Market: Silver Mining in Colonial Potosí, 1545-1650* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, 1573-1700* (Stanford University Press, 1985).

place to place trying to make a living or finding a place to settle down. Ann M. Wightman examines the social impact those individuals had in society, in their indigenous communities and also in the new structures developed by the colonial authorities. She argues that the *forasteros'* migration was not just for economic reasons, but it was also a form of resistance to the disruption caused by the European invasion and its labor practices.<sup>52</sup>

Another form of disruption caused by the colonizers was the one imposed on the indigenous population's own culture. Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins explore the colonial imposition on the indigenous people in the Andean region regarding the use of the European alphabetical system and other forms of artistic representations the native population was not familiar with, and that did not follow the way they traditionally expressed themselves. The authors intend to explain the "intellectual participation of indigenous peoples in the social formation of colonial Latin America", how literacy was connected to social, political, and economic issues. Literacy was not just writing but also manifested in other forms such as paintings. They argue that in colonial times literacy was used by the educated in the establishment, to control society and delegitimize native cultures. Indigenous elites, confronted with such attitudes, showed agency by adopting the Spanish alphabet in some of their writings or artistic expressions, thus creating a hybrid, shared language with their conquerors: "The encounter of Andean and Spanish

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<sup>52</sup> Ann M. Wightman, *Indigenous Migration*.

technologies and ideological systems under conditions of European domination produced a distinctly colonial culture of communication.”<sup>53</sup>

### b. Gender

It is important to examine how gender relations were established in Spain before and during the time period in which Arzáns wrote the *Historia*, to see if the men who created the new colonies in America were replicating the laws, moral codes, and power structures of their patriarchal society in Europe or, if the new environment and the encounter with different individuals and ideologies caused them to adapt and/or modify their attitudes towards gender representation.

Mary Elizabeth Perry’s study covers the effect of the patriarchal system in the lives of women, linking it to issues of social order. She explains how male authorities, either in the Church or the state, need to control women’s behavior to protect the social structure. She focuses on women of 16<sup>th</sup> century Seville, a city she describes as a place of “contrasts where sharpening conflicts and astonishing excesses clearly revealed in magnified detail the significance of gender for social order.”<sup>54</sup> Seville was the hub where all commerce between Spain and its American colonies passed through. Also, it was the seat of the first Inquisition Tribunal in Spain.

Nora E. Jaffary’s work seeks to understand “how gender dynamics played a constitutive role in the establishment and maintenance of European colonial

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<sup>53</sup> Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacy in the Andes*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012), 5, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 3.

ventures.”<sup>55</sup> In one of the essays in this book, Kathryn Burns examines the *beateríos* for indigenous women in Cuzco. *Beateríos* were cloistered religious houses where *beatas*, non-ordained women, choose to retire to a secluded life. These houses offered poor women, indigenous or otherwise, the opportunity to have an education and a good upbringing. Furthermore, these institutions provided elite men with a secure place to keep women from their families safe from world temptations, which would also protect the honor of the family as well.<sup>56</sup>

The next works deal exclusively with women in the Andean region. Irene Silverblatt, explores issues of parallelism and complementarity of pre-Conquest Inca Empire and post-Conquest effects over issues of gender and class. Silverblatt argues that the Spanish project of colonization needed to reconstruct gender ideologies among the indigenous population in order to solidify its rule. She states that Andean women defied the new ruling, and although they were made to be “witches,” they managed to turn witchcraft into something that they could use to their advantage, a tactic of resistance.<sup>57</sup> Luis Martin’s book explores the lives of women of all backgrounds in Peruvian colonial society. Whether the descendants of the Europeans, the indigenous peoples, or the African women, he argues that they all made their contribution at different levels in colonial society.<sup>58</sup> Kimberly

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<sup>55</sup> Nora E. Jaffary, *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 9.

<sup>56</sup> “Kathryn Burns, “Andean Women in Religion: *Beatas*, ‘Decency’ and the Defense of Honor in Colonial Cuzco”, in Jaffary’s *Gender, Race and Religion*, 81-91.

<sup>57</sup> Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Perú* (Princeton: University Press, 1987), 213.

<sup>58</sup> Luis Martin, *Daughters of the Conquistadores: Women of the Viceroyalty of Perú* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

Gauderman, Karen B. Graubart, and Mariselle Meléndez all examine the role of women in colonial society in the Andean regions, and how they played an important part in society in the economy in particular. Gauderman argues that although the European patriarchal system was strong in the colonies, women of all backgrounds were nevertheless able to participate in society in the work force (petty traders, textiles, domestic servants). They also showed their ability to adapt and petition the courts in defense of their rights to own property, defend themselves from abusive husbands, etc.<sup>59</sup> Graubart 's work centers mostly on indigenous women and how they were also able to participate in the economy, even after the organization of their communities was disrupted by the colonial system. These two studies focus on women's lives as they participated in the colonial society through their labor and also on how the nature of power in patriarchal society affected not just their work, but also their personal relationships with men in their private lives.<sup>60</sup> Meléndez's book "examines the spiritual and social construction of the female body in terms of the economic, religious and political reforms of the time." She argues that "in Perú in the Eighteenth-Century, indigenous insurrections created anxiety among colonial authorities and that "this anxiety was usually directed towards the bodies of those individuals who were perceived as different, including indigenous groups, those of African descent, and women." Also, women's bodies were vessels for future generations; therefore, while performing those roles, women's bodies had to be

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<sup>59</sup> Kimberly Gauderman, *Women's Lives in Colonial Quito: Gender, Law and the Economy in Spanish America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> Karen B. Graubart, *With Our Labor and Sweat: Indigenous Women and the Formation of Colonial Society in Perú, 1550-1700* (Stanford University Press, 2007).

closely supervised by men in position of power such as male family members and authorities to avoid disruptions or contamination of society.<sup>61</sup>

Kathryn Burns explains how nuns in the convents of Cuzco were not only involved in spiritual matters in the community, but they were also very active members in the economy by managing property, donating money to the convents, and providing loans.<sup>62</sup> Nancy E. van Deusen explores the practice of *recogimiento* (withdrawal or seclusion from society to meditate and achieve a closer communication with God), which, she explains, had also other objectives. *Recogimiento* provided housing and education for young indigenous girls and a place to live for older widowed women who wanted to retire and live honorably on their own; it was also a home for women in need of rehabilitation, such as prostitutes. As regards to the nuns in the convents, Van Deusen argues that they were not passive and solely involved in religious matters; in fact, they were also occupied in day-to-day activities in the community.<sup>63</sup>

Nora E. Jaffary and Jane E. Mangan, Asunción Lavrin, Elinor Burkett, and Susan Migden Socolow all present very useful insights concerning the lives of women, interaction between men and women, gender roles, etc., in the Andean regions, and also in other areas of Spanish America. Their works form a baseline to the research I need to carry out for my proposed investigation because they are not

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<sup>61</sup> Mariselle Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens: The Cultural Production of the Female Body in Eighteenth Century Perú*, (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>62</sup> Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Perú*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>63</sup> Nancy E. van Deusen, *Between the Sacred and the Worldly: The Institutional and Cultural Practices of Recogimiento in Colonial Lima*, (Stanford University Press, 2001).

just about “women” in colonial Latin American society; they are in fact comprehensive studies of everyday interactions between both the genders. Jaffary and Mangan ask, “How did women and men interact?” A prominent characteristic of historiography of women in colonial Latin America is that it frequently analyzes women in relationships with or in comparison with men. “Therefore, readers will find that as much as they can identify about women within these documents, there is also much to be learned in them about men.”<sup>64</sup> Lavrin has edited a collection of essays concerned with the female experience in colonial Latin America, works that “...have tried to revise the stereotype of the Latin women as a passive element in society, by emphasizing the role of women as doers and agents, even though their position in society was lower than that of men.”<sup>65</sup> Elinor Burkett’s essay examines how the Conquest altered indigenous women’s lives. She argues that Andean women worked mostly in urban areas, in markets and as domestic servants. However, and although women were not allowed to work in the mines, this provision was often overlooked as it happened in Potosí: “For the most part, those who wash (the mineral) are Indian or black women. These women, or washers, are seated by the water and have their legs in the water up to their knees, or almost, according to the site or water level.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jaffary and Mangan, *Women in Colonial Latin America*, xxvii.

<sup>65</sup> Asunción Lavrin, ed., *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Domingo Amunátegui Solar, *Las encomiendas indígenas en Chile*, (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Cervantes, 1909), 115, in Elinor C. Burkett, “Indian Women and White Society: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Perú”, in Lavrin, *Latin American Women*, 113.

Socolow sets to examine the “roles and rules” of masculinity and femininity that were defined and constructed in colonial Latin America society, aiming to understand the limitations experienced by women. In that patriarchal society, she argues, “... women were defined first and foremost by their sex, and secondly by their race or social class.” However, she adds, we need to study these three factors together, gender, race, and class, to fully comprehend the female experience in colonial Latin America.<sup>67</sup>

The next works cover a diversity of issues about gender in Colonial Latin America: marriage, family, children, and also how relationships between men and women are connected to power, race, religion, class, and sexuality. Sherry Velasco’s study, which mostly centers on the main character of a pregnant man in a popular Early Modern Spain play, describes societal concerns about changing gender roles, traditional norms being transgressed, and fear of effeminacy in men involved in sodomy.<sup>68</sup> Anita K. Stoll and Dawn L. Smith study is a collection of essays that discusses the representation of gender in literature, covering issues of identity and gender portrayal in 17th century Spanish literature and theatrical representations, mainly focusing on cross-dressing characters. Stoll and Smith remark, “Whether examining works of narrative fiction or dramas written for performance, or whether focusing on male characters or female characters, the authors (of the essays) reach some strikingly similar conclusions which reinforce the wider view of the far-

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<sup>67</sup> Susan Migden Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Sherry Velasco, *Male Delivery, Reproduction, Effeminacy and Pregnant Men in Early Modern Spain*, (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2006).

reaching concern with these issues in Early Modern Europe.”<sup>69</sup> One of the historical accounts in Arzáns’ work is “Los hechos de dos doncellas nobles naturales de esta Villa,”<sup>70</sup> in which he chronicles the lives of two young, noble women who decided to dress as men in order to be able to leave their house and experience all that the city of Potosí had to offer but was forbidden to them because of their gender.

Steve J. Stern examines gendered relations, observing both the effect of patriarchy and issues of power and domination by men and the agency of women who challenged men on these issues. He argues that gender relations were defined by the defiance of the patriarchal rights men exercised, giving women the possibility of developing other forms of contestation.<sup>71</sup>

Richard Boyer investigates family, marriage, and community in colonial Mexico between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He argues that often, once Spanish men (and women too) moved to the American colonies, living in a new place --far away from their homes in Europe-- gave them the opportunity to make new lives, sometimes leaving behind older relationships and discarding all previous commitments.<sup>72</sup> Potosí, with its large influx of people, not just from the Andean region, but also from other countries, was certainly a fitting place to start new lives.

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<sup>69</sup> Anita K Stoll and Dawn L. Smith, eds., *Gender, Identity, and Representation in Spain's Golden Age*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>70</sup> Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), II, 149-155.

This edition of the *Historia* consists of: 1) Three tomes henceforth *Historia I, II, III*; 2) An Introduction in Tome I by the editors, Lewis Hanke and Gunnar Mendoza; 3) A separate tome, *Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela's Historia de Potosí*, by Lewis Hanke.

<sup>71</sup> Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender*:

<sup>72</sup> Richard Boyer, *Lives of the Bigamists: Marriage, Family and Community in Colonial Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

### c. Honor

The concept of honor was a cornerstone of Iberian society, one that could carry the same weight in the Americas as it did in Europe, where it would be redefined in the New World to accommodate the new social order. Men, both *Peninsulares* and *Criollos*, understood that those codes of conduct that had been ruling society for centuries in the Iberian Peninsula were essential to advance ideologies of male domination, not only over females, but also over the newly conquered peoples in the New World.

*The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame and Violence in Colonial Latin America* is a collection of essays edited by Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera. The common thread that joins the essays together is precisely what it is indicated in the title: *Honor*, which was not a homogenous concept for all people. It signified different things to different people --aristocracy and plebeians, men and women, etc. And it did have, in fact, many faces; we learn how some people could still keep their reputations from being damaged even if they stepped out of the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. One of the essays, Geoffrey Spurling's "Honor, Sexuality, and the Colonial Church," covers the trials of Dr. Gaspar González, cathedral canon in Potosí who was accused of sodomy. Spurling examines the honor/dishonor associated with charges, including issues of class and ethnicity because Dr. González occupied a high position in the Catholic Church, and some of the men with whom he was accused of being involved were of lower rank in society. Surprisingly, the author says, Dr. González retained his honor, with no serious

consequences to his status in society, while the men with whom he was involved, received harsh punishments.<sup>73</sup> Another essay in this collection is “Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America” by Mark A. Burkholder, who begins with a quote from Bartolome Bennassar: “These crazy Spaniards have more regard for a bit of honor than for a thousand lives; they do not know how to relax and enjoy life.”<sup>74</sup> Burkholder says that the quote came from a contemporary of Christopher Columbus, and it is strong evidence of how important it was to have, to maintain, and to prove honor. He adds that Spanish men “value honor so greatly that most will choose death rather than tarnish it.”<sup>75</sup> These strong beliefs in the concept of honor are similar to the ones often expressed by men in the *Historia*.

Sara C. Chambers’ book focuses on the independence period in the Americas but is useful for understanding how the issues of honor in colonial society were still present after the people in the colonies decided to sever ties with Spain. Also, this author explains how the changes in authority in the colonial, political, and social structures did not translate into more freedom or participation for women.<sup>76</sup> Ann Twinam’s study argues that the concept of honor was so important in colonial society that people went to great lengths to request petitions of legitimacy for

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<sup>73</sup> Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, 62.

<sup>74</sup> Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, from *The Spanish Character: Attitudes and Mentalities from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 18.

<sup>75</sup> Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, from *The Spanish Character*, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Sarah Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Perú, 1780-1854*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

themselves or their offspring in order to avoid losing reputation and standing in the community.<sup>77</sup> Speaking of honor, Twinam states:

“Honor was profoundly important because it rationalizes hierarchy, the division of Hispanic society between a privileged few and a deprived majority. It established a distinctive agenda of discrimination because those who possessed it were privileged with special access to political, economic, and social power, they maintained their superior rank by discriminating against anyone else. Those with honor recognized it in others and accorded those peers an attention and respect they denied the rest of society.”<sup>78</sup>

Colonial culture, not just in Potosí, but also in the rest of the Spanish colonies in Latin America, had issues of honor at the core of its social and cultural structures. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Lyman Johnson point out that as regards to honor, societal norms in colonial Latin America were founded in those that Iberian cultures held prior to the Conquest. The concept of honor was rooted in the belief that it followed a hierarchical order that flowed down from God to the imperial rulers and then to the nobility and finally to the common people.<sup>79</sup> Arzáns’ historical accounts detail many instances where male members of society faced situations in which their ideas about hetero-normative masculinity and their connection to honor were performed, challenged, tarnished, proved, or defeated.

#### d. Masculinity Studies

Present studies of masculinity grew from the area of feminist studies in the 1970s. A decade later, it developed into a separate area of study, and, in the recent years, we have observed an increased production of scholarly works in the field of

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<sup>77</sup> Ann Twinam, *Private Lives, Public Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*, (Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>78</sup> Twinam, *Private Lives*, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, 13.

colonial men and masculinities. The scholarly field on masculinity includes an important focus on same sex activities and identities, works that deal mostly with the prosecution of same sex relationships, described as *contra natura* actions, definitions of masculinity, effeminacy, and Spanish refusal to comprehend and accept non-heterosexual actions and behaviors in the conquered native population. In Early Modern Spain, masculinity was fixated on virility, valor in warfare, and honorable and impeccable behavior. A man was supposed to be proud of his gender and defend the true faith; he was supposed to be the “conqueror” (active), not the “conquered” (passive). Cristian Berco covers sodomy trials in Aragón, the study of male sexuality, and how it relates to social structures. He examines how homosexuality was perceived in a context of masculinity that advocated male domination of the active participant over the weak, passive one.<sup>80</sup> Federico Garza Carvajal examines the prosecution of sodomy in Spain and Mexico, arguing that homosexuality was viewed as a “plague” that was spread by the “other” and that it was used in the Spanish American colonies to support Spain’s colonial project.<sup>81</sup> Pete Sigal’s collection of essays is a comprehensive study of homosexuality from preconquest to the 18<sup>th</sup> century; he examines what the Europeans and the native population they found in the Americas thought about such sexual behavior. In traditional Spanish society, an honorable man was supposed to have sex with women to procreate; if instead he participated in homosexual relationships, he was

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<sup>80</sup> Christian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy and Society in Spain Golden Age*, (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

<sup>81</sup> Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2003).

considered effeminate and dishonorable.<sup>82</sup> Ward Stavig's essay examines the reaction of Spanish *conquistadores* when they encountered homosexual behavior among indigenous peoples in the Andean region. He argues: "16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish attitudes toward male homosexuality were deeply rooted not only in Spanish morality, but in prejudice and propaganda against the Moors," adding that the creation of "otherizing" --first regarding the Muslim invaders, and later the New World peoples-- was always connected to the distaste they felt towards those who were not Spaniards.<sup>83</sup> *Sins Against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* by Zeb Tortorici explores the prosecution of deviant sexuality, describing how the church and the crown administrators in Mexico and Guatemala used the courts to control sexual behavior. By using the word "nature," they were trying to regulate procreation in order to sustain the Spanish imperial project.<sup>84</sup>

More recent works are distinguished by presenting different contexts and propositions regarding historical, hegemonic, and hetero-normative, etc., masculinities. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera's book on late colonial Mexico is the only significant monograph on heterosexual men, and it will serve as a guideline for this study. Her examination of gender relations focuses on masculine culture, how men relate to each other, and stereotypes of masculinity. She argues that there were in fact many types of masculinity and that gender identity was performed and enacted

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<sup>82</sup> Pete Sigal, *Infamous Desire: Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>83</sup> Ward Stavig, "Political 'Abomination' and Private Reservation: The Nefarious Sin, Homosexuality and Cultural Values in Colonial Perú", in Sigal *Infamous Desire*, 142.

<sup>84</sup> Zeb Tortorici, *Sins Against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

on a daily basis, in accordance with men's status and race. The story of a nobleman who was exiled from Mexico City for disregarding or misreading status and rank, serves as an excellent example of how difficult it was for men "to maneuver the complexities of hierarchy that were by no means straightforward."<sup>85</sup>

e. Works on Potosí and *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*

Lewis Hanke's introduction to the Brown University publication of the *Historia* in 1964 is the only major published study on the subject. On a lesser scale, Kris Lane recently published two books about Potosí: *The silver city that changed the world* in 2019, covering the emergence of the city as a global metropolis, its decline, and its present situation. He provides information about the *Villa* and the *Potosinos*, but his focus is mainly on the mining angle. *Pandemic in Potosí* in 2021, is about the great Andean Pandemic of 1717-1722 that killed thousands in the city.

There are several scholarly articles and dissertations that have used Arzán's work as part of the examination of different topics related to Perú, Potosí, the silver mines, history, religion, etc. None of those works examine the issues of masculinity that I intend to carry out in my dissertation. Among these articles, and in the field of mining and labor, Rossana Barragán examines how mine workers in the mines and mine related business "fundamentally shaped Potosí's labor system."<sup>86</sup> Orlando

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<sup>85</sup> Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Origins of Macho: Men and Masculinity in Colonial Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019), 2, 3.

<sup>86</sup> "Working Silver for the world: Mining Labor and Popular Economy in Colonial Potosí", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 97:2, 2017, 193.

Bentancort describes the work of *Kajchas* in the mines.<sup>87</sup> Lewis Hanke examines the contribution of the Portuguese mines in Spanish America and especially those that worked in the Potosí mines.<sup>88</sup>

Two articles on gender in Potosí explore the portrayal of women in Arzáns' *Historia*: Ana María Díaz Burgos argues that, as depicted by Arzáns, wanton women could be purified through devotion and repentance;<sup>89</sup> Margaret E. Boyle presents an examination of Arzáns' classification of women as "good or bad", and what those "binary categorizations tell us about the representation of women's lived experiences throughout the colonial period."<sup>90</sup>

In relation to the portrayal of the *Criollos* in Potosí, and how Arzáns compared them to indigenous people and *Peninsulares*, Denise Galarza Sepúlveda explains how Arzáns utilized a negative representation for foreigners --they were greedy, lustful, conceited-- and another positive one for the *Criollos*, "whose birthright makes them heirs to the city's riches in every sense."<sup>91</sup> Leonardo García Pabón explains that the numerous descriptions of lavish celebrations in the city were utilized by Arzáns to support the prominence of the *Criollo* population.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> "La Apropiación de la Figura del Kajcha en la *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*", *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. LXXIII, Núm. 220, Julio-Septiembre, 2007. *Kajchas* were *mitayos* that could mine for their own benefits from Saturday evening to Monday morning, from Cole, *The Potosí Mita*, 14.

<sup>88</sup> "The Portuguese in Spanish America, With Special Reference to the *Villa Imperial de Potosí*", *Revista de Historia de América*, No. 51 (Jun., 1961).

<sup>89</sup> "Hacerse Digno de Buena Muerte: Devoción y Arrepentimiento Femeninos en la *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí, 1700-1720*", *Dieciocho*, 39.1 (Spring 2016).

<sup>90</sup> "Chronicling Women's Containment in Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela's *Historia de Potosí*", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 39, 2010, 280.

<sup>91</sup> "Of Legends and Lack: The Economy of Criollo Discourse in the *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*", *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, Vol. 42, Issue 1 (2008), 20.

<sup>92</sup> "Indios, Criollos y Fiesta Barroca en la *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*", *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. 61, Issue 172-173, 1955.

Eliane Talbot argues that *Criollos*, especially those born near the Potosí Mountain, felt a strong bond with the land because they thought that the rich mountain was the “center of the world,” which also legitimized their authority over other peoples in the city.<sup>93</sup>

Among the dissertations that focus on issues about Potosí, Louis John Casa describes life in Potosí in the silver mines environment and the role the Spaniards played as owners and managers of the mines.<sup>94</sup> Denise Galarza Sepúlveda presents a portrayal of Potosí in the tradition of colonial discursive praise of Spanish American cities and spaces.<sup>95</sup> David Dressing chronicles the violence that erupted in the city among different factions of Spaniards in Potosí in the seventeenth century.<sup>96</sup> Shidarta Vásquez Córdoba investigates the religious world of the city, the rituals and the miracles described in the *Historia*.<sup>97</sup> Claudia A. Cornejo Happel in “Decadent Wealth, Degenerate Morality, Dominance and Devotion: The Discordant Iconicity of the Rich Mountain of Potosí,” examines the city of Potosí not just as a source of exorbitant wealth, but also as a central element in the discourse of social, political and economic issues.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Criollos y Peninsulares en la obra de Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela: *La Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*,” *Bolivian Studies*, Volume 11, 2004, 202-203.

<sup>94</sup> “Potosí, Its Mines and Its Indians”, Loyola University, Chicago, Dept. of History, PhD, 1966.

<sup>95</sup> “City, Myth, and Morality in Bartolomé Arzáns’ *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*”, Emory University, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, PhD, 2002.

<sup>96</sup> “Social Tensions in Early Seventeenth-Century Potosí”, Tulane University, Dept. of History, PhD, 2007.

<sup>97</sup> “La Crónica de Potosí y sus Milagros: Complejidad Cultural y Modelación de Relaciones Simbólicas”, University of Western Ontario, Dept. of Hispanic Studies, PhD, 2010.

<sup>98</sup> “Decadent Wealth, Degenerate Morality, Decadence and Devotion: The Discordant Iconicity of the Rich Mountain of Potosí”, Ohio State University, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, PhD, 2014.

### Layout

This dissertation is composed of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion, which altogether examines the culture of masculinity in colonial Potosí. In the First Chapter, I will describe Potosí, its microcosm, its environment, and provide a general overview of the diverse population of the *Villa*. I will also examine the effect in the city of the copious wealth that the mine operations originated, and how the *Potosinos* displayed their riches in their everyday life activities. The Second Chapter will examine gender relations, the performance of masculinity and issues related to honor. Chapter Three will explore violence and how it was used to solve almost any dispute or disagreement in the city, either interpersonal (jilted lovers, jealous spouses, personal grievances), or collective (challenge to authority, government corruption, civil wars among different regional groups from Spain). I will analyze the connection of male violent behavior and Potosí's immense wealth, secluded location, and large population where masculine culture was associated with belligerence. The Fourth Chapter will deal with masculinity performed through the portrayal of pious acts. I will finish with the Conclusion, which will include a summary of the findings and main points of my investigation, and answers to my research questions

## CHAPTER ONE

“The vastly extolled, always famous, majestic, magnificent and rich Villa of Potosí...”

“The famous, always the most highest, immensely rich and bottomless *Cerro de Potosí*...”<sup>99</sup>

### POTOSÍ, TREASURE OF THE WORLD<sup>100</sup>

This chapter examines the foundation and establishment of the colonial city of Potosí, a unique, outlandish, magnificent place, truly a shiny city upon a mountain, and its complicated relationship to the silver production, which was both the origin of a system of forced labor and the source of fabulous wealth. Such an environment surely must have produced the most uncommon, unconventional kind of men, who had the fortitude --or madness-- to endure the remote, hostile surroundings, the dangers of the mines, and the pervasive violence. This chapter also explores the demographic components of the Villa

#### Portrait of an Imperial Villa

Even at the height of the silver production, when the wealth the mining produced was seen on display in clothes, food, jewelry, ornate churches, etc., Potosí remained small, crowded, full of rambling streets, dark alleys, and rudimentary houses, except, of course, for the dwellings of the rich mine owners and government

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<sup>99</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 3.

<sup>100</sup> “I am Potosí, treasure of the world, the king of all mountains, and the envy of all kings.” This is the motto that appeared in Potosí’s Coat of Arms, from R. C. Padden, *Tales of Potosí*, xiii.

officials. Again, this city did not resemble many of the other colonial cities in Spanish Colonial America mostly because people who came to the city -- predominantly single men-- did it with the idea of getting rich quickly in the silver business, and once this was accomplished, they would leave and settle down in a different place to enjoy their fortune, either back in Spain or in another location in Latin America. The harsh climate of Potosí and its isolation was not the place where people would like to put down roots; this created a city with its own rules, its particular ways, a place with a pervasive feeling of transitoriness. Even the native population that the *Mita* brought to Potosi lived there only for the periods of time they were assigned to work in the mines, mostly returning to their villages afterwards.

This transient environment was conducive to peculiar, unconventional, and volatile social interactions and behaviors. Brawls and duels were a common occurrence in Potosí. Men were often ready to solve disputes by physical force, quick to unsheathe their weapons and start a fight. These fights could start as a disagreement between two people, but often, it was not unusual that those clashes would turn into a massive melee involving large numbers of men; death was frequently the outcome of those clashes. Although many of the *Potosinos* were God-fearing people who went to church regularly, helped the needy, and lived honest lives, many others were the complete opposite. For the latter, it was almost as if the particular circumstances of living in Potosí, a place so far away from their homelands, in a location so far removed from other towns, a place so cold, barren

and inhospitable, gave them a nod to engage in outlandish behavior so as to compensate for the dire situations they were forced to face every day, such as competing for resources, viceregal favors, positions, access to the mines, etc.

This small mining town became then crowded with men who had no particular occupation, passing the time idly, hoping for the opportunity of getting a share of the wealth produced by the silver mines. In such conditions, isolated, overpopulated, and with tempting access to wealth, it is no surprise that there was a constant climate of violence in Potosí. No other city in Spanish Colonial America had to endure such hardship. Frequently, visitors to Colonial Potosí commented on the violence they encountered, therefore the violent behavior of men in the *Villa* became one of the most distinct ways in which they performed their masculinity. In some respects, the *Potosinos* were forced to make a pact with the devil; in other words, they had to take the good with the bad because in order to make a quick fortune they had to live in a crowded, poorly planned city, they had to accept the harsh environment, constant violent fights, bad behaviors, and lax morality. Under those circumstances, even righteous men came to be vicious. Potosí was almost a universe of its own, separated from the rest of the world by physical distance and disregard of social rules and traditions. When visitors described the *Villa's* streets, plazas, and dwellings, they were not using their imagination to create a more colorful locale for their work; in fact, they were faithfully describing Potosí. The city

was not carefully planned intentionally because the Spaniards thought that the mines would stop producing silver sooner rather than later.<sup>101</sup>

### Early History of Potosí

Potosí was founded in 1545 as a mining town, after silver was found in the *Cerro* a few miles away. At the beginning, only less than one hundred houses were built; by 1546 there were 2,500 houses for 14,000 people including Europeans and the native population. The building of Potosí was hasty, sloppy, and did not follow any pattern or organization.<sup>102</sup>

Bolivian historian Gustavo Adolfo Otero states that constructions in Potosí reflected the simple native architecture, which adjusted the building of the houses to the conditions of the bleak surroundings. Urban construction in Potosí shows that it was built primarily to have protection from the cold and winds and to take advantage of the winding and intricate turnings of the terrain in the area. The early dwellings were a necessity for the people working in the silver mines, thus they were located near the mountain. Those people needed dwellings that offered shelter from the cold temperatures and severe winds; therefore, the small houses and narrow streets were not just an oddity but in fact a clever design. Narrow streets provided a safe cover and protection from strong gusts of wind; small houses clustered together were also easier to heat up. Grand buildings, churches, and elite housing developed beyond the original miners' houses and indigenous *rancherías* (humble dwellings

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<sup>101</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 42.

<sup>102</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 42.

where natives congregated) were an intentional way of flaunting the wealth the labor of the lower-class people had created for those in the higher status of society. Extravagance was a form of celebrating a city whose matter-of-fact objective for existing was to create wealth.<sup>103</sup>

Colonial travelers who visited Potosí in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries certainly faced dangerous roads and the dismal physical environment of the area. Comments are included in their chronicles about the difficulties of traveling to Potosí, and how unbearable cold and windy it was. The fifty-mile journey between La Plata --seat of the *Audiencia* which rule over the region-- and Potosí does not seem a long distance in today's highway system; however, according to historian Josep P. Barnadas, at the time, traveling on the roads of colonial Perú constituted an extremely taxing and dangerous journey.<sup>104</sup> The conditions of the roads affected also the transport of necessities for everyday life in the *Villa*, which had to be brought from far-away places since Potosí and its surroundings were barren due to the harsh climate and the impossibility of any farming. This problem was witnessed by Alonso Carrió de La Vandra during his travel to Potosí in the 1700s. He explains how the *arrieros* (muleteers) had difficulties bringing goods to the *Villa* because the roads were in bad shape, which affected the performance of the mules. He adds that two-thirds of the road from La

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<sup>103</sup> Gustavo Adolfo Otero, *Vida social en el coloniaje: Esquema de la historia del Alto Perú, hoy Bolivia, de los siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII*, (Rolando Diez de Medina, La Paz, Bolivia, 2011), Capítulo XVI, 93

<sup>104</sup> Josep M. Barnadas, *Charcas: orígenes históricos de una sociedad colonial: 1535-1565* (La Paz, Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado, 1973), 38.

Plata to Potosí was rough and difficult, covered with loose stones.<sup>105</sup> Accarette Du Biscay wrote in the mid-1600s that the journey from Jujuy (Argentina) to Potosí is a distance of 100 *leguas* (260 miles), the road was very difficult, but there was no other way to get there.<sup>106</sup> Luis Capoche, owner of mines and mills in Potosí, describes how the *Villa* was surrounded by rugged terrain, slopes, and ravines.<sup>107</sup> Juan de Matienzo, Oidor (Judge) of the *Audiencia de Charcas* in the 1500s, indicated that the roads between Charcas and Potosí were very bad and dangerous.<sup>108</sup>

Traveling to Potosí was certainly a difficult and dangerous feat, but that was just the first step of the journey, since settling in the *Villa* would prove to be challenging to say the least. Visitors to Potosí all mentioned how cold, windy, desolate, and uninhabitable it was. Luis Capoche described the physical environment of the area of the *Cerro* and the *Villa* as cold, barren land where snows were heavy, and nothing would grow, except potatoes. He added that the place was barely livable due to its bad weather, which is dry and cold. A strong wind, the *Tomahavi*, fierce and frigid, blew so much dust and sand that the air darkened, creating harshness and uneasiness in people.<sup>109</sup> Traveler and explorer Gregorio de

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<sup>105</sup> Alonso Carrió de la Vandra (Concolorcorvo), *El Lazarillo de Ciegos Caminantes: Desde Buenos Aires hasta Lima*, (Buenos Aires, Stockcero, 2005), 95, 76. Carrió de la Vandra was a traveler and writer that visited Perú in the 1700s.

<sup>106</sup> Accarette Du Biscay, *Viajes al Río de la Plata y a Potosí (1657-1660)*, (Florida: Stockcero, 2008), 36. Translated by Jean-Paul Diviols.

<sup>107</sup> Luis Capoche, *Relación General de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, (Madrid: Atlas, 1959), 76.

<sup>108</sup> Juan de Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú (1567)*, (Paris-Lima, L'Institut Francais d'Etudes Andines: 1967), Tome XI, 312.

<sup>109</sup> Capoche, *Relación*, 75.

Robles described what he observed in Potosí and its surroundings, depicting how the harsh environment affected every day life: “This country is so cold, and the terrain so rugged, that I could not finish my reconnaissance of it, as the cordillera is full of snow all year round, and on the slopes of the greater part of it, such that in the country they say that when water is carried in gunny sacks, it is ice what they collect; the ice had to be melted over fires to reduce it to water.”<sup>110</sup> Accarette Du Biscay also mentions the strong winds and extremely cold temperatures, which affected the people working on the *Cerro*, who tended to seek comfort in consuming *coca* and drinking *chicha*.<sup>111</sup> Jesuit missionary José de Acosta states that Perú was terribly cold, sterile, and dry; the wind (*Tomahavi*) was extremely dry, cold, and unpleasant. He describes the terrain as neither fertile nor mild, adding that the mines were located in very harsh, dry and barren land, among high mountains, on rough peaks. The ground was completely barren, did not produce fruit, grain, or grass, and it was not habitable due to the unfavorable weather and the great barrenness of the earth.<sup>112</sup>

Pedro Vicente Cañete, Oidor of the *Audiencia de La Plata* made similar statements about the weather conditions in Potosí, which he described as so cold that nothing would grow. He also explains how for fifty years after the first European settlers arrived in Potosí, no newborn child would survive for more than fifteen days. Expectant mothers used to deliver their babies in the nearby valleys and did not

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<sup>110</sup> De Robles, *América*, 52-53.

<sup>111</sup> Accarette Du Biscay, *Viajes*, 45.

<sup>112</sup> de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History*, 96, 105, 144, 165, 172.

return to the *Villa* until the infants were at least one year old.<sup>113</sup> Those valleys, as described by Carmelite Priest Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, were around six *leguas* (sixteen miles) from Potosí. The wonderful weather there permitted all kind of fruits to grow.<sup>114</sup>

Pedro Cieza de León, Reginaldo de Lizárraga, and Fray Diego de Ocaña also described Potosí as cold, snowy, and barren. The lack of farming in Potosí made it necessary to transport food and other supplies needed for daily life from other places in Perú, and sometimes luxury items came from around the world. This increased the cost of the provisions, which was a burden for the lower sections of society. Accarette Du Biscay states that despite the high cost of living for some, this did not dissuade people from going to the *Villa* because money flowed abundantly, and people could easily become rich if they were ready to work.<sup>115</sup>

In the beginning, the mining settlement of Potosí had most of the houses built as close as possible to the *Cerro*, starting with the *rancheria* neighborhoods where natives lived, mainly in humble *buhios* (huts) made of adobe and straw. This was not unusual, the rough and unplanned establishment of Potosí was in fact similar to that of other mining towns in Spanish America.<sup>116</sup> At the time, people thought the silver veins would be exhausted quickly, therefore it was not necessary

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<sup>113</sup> Pedro Vicente Cañete y Domínguez, *Potosí Colonial: Guía Histórica, Geográfica, Política, Civil y Legal del Gobierno e Intendencia de la Provincia de Potosí*, (La Paz, Bolivia: Artística, 1939), 138.

<sup>114</sup> Antonio Vázques de Espinoza, *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, (Madrid: Atlas, 1969), 418

<sup>115</sup> Accarette Du Biscay, *Viajes*, 43.

<sup>116</sup> Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 10.

to spend effort and resources in the construction of a well-planned town.<sup>117</sup> As the original settlement grew with more Europeans arriving in Potosí, houses became more elaborate, in locations further away from the *Cerro*; many of those houses surrounded the main plaza in the area where other important government buildings such as the *Casa de la Moneda* (Mint) and the *Caja Real* (Royal Treasury Office) were located.<sup>118</sup> By 1561 King Phillip II gave Potosí the title of Imperial Village; by 1577 the population of Potosí surpassed 50,000. A few years later, its population was bigger than in most cities in Europe. Potosí could not be compared to other cities of Spanish America because its development had always been tied to the continuous ups and downs of the mining operations. In fact, Potosí is the perfect example of a city that personifies excessive and rapid development since it was born, evolved and saw decline in a period of one hundred years. The same trajectory would have taken around three hundred years for other cities in Spanish Colonial America because in those cities the economic progress and downturns would have been associated with more reliable and regular agricultural and commercial activities. Potosí, on the other hand, was all about the good times and the debacles in the mining business. By mid-seventeenth century, Potosí had

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<sup>117</sup> José Antonio Fuertes López, *Creación de la Villa Imperial de Potosí: La Capitulación de 1561*, (Cochabamba, Bolivia: Grupo Editorial Kipus, 2010), 27.

<sup>118</sup> Jane E. Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 27, citing Concolorcorvo's *Descripción de la Villa y minas de Potosí: Año de 1603*, in *Relaciones geográficas de Indias: Perú*, edited by Marcos Jiménez de la Espada, Vols. 183-85 of *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles desde la formación del lenguaje hasta nuestros días*, (Madrid, Atlas, 1965), 374.

160,000 inhabitants, while the city of La Paz (founded three years after Potosí, and situated in between Potosí and Lima) had 7,000, only reaching its peak of 23,000 dwellers in the eighteenth century.<sup>119</sup>

Potosí offered quick wealth to her inhabitants but at very high price. Located above the *Puna*, the *Villa* at 13,000 ft and the *Cerro* at 16,000 ft., created a physical environment that was bleak, deprived of any vegetation, and with extreme cold temperatures, strong winds, and low levels of oxygen. Arzáns describes how the effect of the altitude and harsh climate made the ground unable to support any kind of crops. "*Codicia humana*" (human greed) was how he rationalized the fact that such a desolate and dismal place could attract settlers.<sup>120</sup> Around Potosí, just a few crops were able to grow: --potatoes, green barley, beans, maize-- and those only in some areas of the valleys between the mountains. However, those areas were very small and produced a paltry fraction of what the city needed.<sup>121</sup> Life conditions were also bleak in the *Villa*, especially for Europeans because they were not accustomed to such high altitude.

The difficulty of living at such high altitude is addressed in one of the *Historia's* historical accounts, --the story of the Spanish Captain Flores and his wife Dona Leonor-- which confirms the statements made by Pedro Vicente Cañete y Domínguez and Antonio Vázquez Espinosa regarding infant mortality previously noted in this dissertation. During six of her pregnancies, Doña Leonor had moved to

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<sup>119</sup> Otero, *Vida Social en el Coloniaje*, 92.

<sup>120</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 7.

the more temperate valleys for the deliveries and the first months of her babies. Nevertheless, all her babies died shortly after they returned to cold, inhospitable Potosí. She was pregnant for the seventh time in 1548 and decided this time to stay in the *Villa* since all her other babies died even though she had tried to protect the pregnancies by leaving the town. Doña Leonor prayed for God's protection and promised to donate a large sum of money to honor St. Nicolás and also to name the baby after the saint, according to Arzáns. The baby was born in Potosí, and luckily for his parents, he survived and grew up healthy. This was the first Spanish/*Criollo* baby born in Potosí who survived infancy. Many babies after that were also named Nicolás to honor the saint who protected the Flores' child.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the dismal surroundings, large numbers of people, attracted by the possibility of becoming rich either in the mines or in other related occupations, set up home in Potosí after silver was discovered in the *Cerro*. Initially, people came from the nearby towns of Porco and La Plata. Soon, when the news of the fabulous wealth Potosí was offering reached Europe, many Europeans came to the *Villa*, mostly from different regions of Spain, but also from Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, etc. They were predominantly men, with a reckless and adventurous spirit, ready to travel across the world and do what was necessary to get rich quickly and not be bothered, by the precarious dwellings or the miserable environment.<sup>123</sup>

Hanke points out that “the Spaniards and other foreigners who strived to go to the

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<sup>122</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 192-193.

<sup>123</sup> Fuertes López, *Creación de la Villa Imperial*, 27.

*Cerro* eager to have their share of the silver it produced were willing to break many laws to arrive in Potosí, and once there they ignored deprivations and diseases.”<sup>124</sup> These unsavory characters did not stop at anything to achieve their goals; their unruly behavior was behind the high level of violence and crimes committed in the *Villa*. Fame and fortune justified everything.

Lane characterizes Potosí in the early seventeenth century as a “global phenomenon” and “...probably the newest city of its size anywhere on the planet, an improbable metropolis at 4,000 meters (13,000 feet) above sea level and deep in the heart of the South American Andes.”<sup>125</sup> Although people from different countries made Potosí their home, at any time, most of its inhabitants were indigenous people, with smaller numbers of Europeans, *criollos*, mestizos and enslaved Africans. The two main indigenous nations in the Potosí area were the Aymara (largest) and the Quechua. These two groups represented the bulk of the native population in Potosí, around 3,000 people. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the native population grew to more than 7,000, and they became the main source of labor in the mines. The people of the Andean and African communities were mostly assigned to work in different fields: Africans in menial jobs, domestic service, and the natives in the mines. The largest population of enslaved Africans in the Americas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was in Perú, mostly in urban areas like Lima, and few in the highlands. The natives worked in mining

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<sup>124</sup> Hanke, *Introduction*, I, xxxi.

<sup>125</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 115-116.

related jobs; their previous presence in the agricultural areas, close to the coastal region, was replaced with enslaved Africans. When the native population declined in the early 1600s, mine owners forced the enslaved Africans to work in the mines for a short period of time until the Spanish crown decided to install the *Mita* system of forced labor again.<sup>126</sup> Contrary to scholarship that indicates Spanish America mistreated slaves less than British America, there are extensive examples of violent interactions between slaveholders and slaves in the Andean region, where corporal punishment was widespread.<sup>127</sup>

By the sixteenth century, a small number of free people of African descent could be found in Potosí. However, most of the people from Africa came as slaves, first with the *Conquistadores* and later brought by traders, by sea to Brazil, then again by boat to Buenos Aires and from there by land to Perú. In the three centuries after the Conquest, enslaved Africans came to Perú in the tens of thousands, with the majority staying in Lima and other coastal cities. Between 1555 and 1588, around 300 slaves arrived yearly in Perú; between 1600 and 1650 it was around 1,500 per year.<sup>128</sup> They worked mostly as artisans, domestic servants, and wet nurses; however, their labor became important after the indigenous population diminished due to diseases and death at the hands of the Europeans. Enslaved

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<sup>126</sup> For more information about the *Mita*, see Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, 1573-1700*, (Stanford University Press, 1985).

<sup>127</sup> Bowser, *The African Slave*, 231-234.

<sup>128</sup> John J. TePaske, Review of "The African Slave in Colonial Perú, 1524-1650" by Frederick P. Bowser. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 55, Issue 2, May 1, 1975.

Blacks were also a symbol of prestige in Spanish households.<sup>129</sup> The enslaved did not work in the mines as the Spaniards claimed they were not cut out for working underground in the *Cerro* because they could not adapt easily to the altitude around Potosí.<sup>130</sup> According to Inge Wolff, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were around 5,000 Blacks living in Potosí working as domestic servants or craftsmen. A small number worked in the Potosí mint.<sup>131</sup>

In Potosí mostly indigenous women worked in the markets and taverns and provided food and laundry services for the men working in the mines; as the city grew, markets multiplied around the *Villa*. The largest market in Potosí was *La Plaza del Gato* (from the Quechua *kjato*: market), also known as *Gato de Indias*. The market opened daily, and most of the vendors were also native women selling *maize* (corn), coca leaves, clothing, *ají* (peppers), *chuño* (freeze dried potato product), and clothing.<sup>132</sup> *Mitayos* (*Mita* workers) were the main customers of the market for inexpensive clothing because they worked long hours in the mine and did not have the time or skill to make their own clothes.<sup>133</sup>

Very few Spanish women came to Potosí during most of the sixteenth century due to the hardship of the environment and the dismal circumstance of life in the mining settlement. Right before the beginning of the next century, there was an

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<sup>129</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 87.

<sup>130</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 41.

<sup>131</sup> Inge Wolff, "Negersklaverei und Negerhandel in Hochperu, 1545-1640." *Jahrbuch fur Geschicthe von Staat. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 1 (1964), 157-186. In Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 192.

<sup>132</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 27.

<sup>133</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 49.

increase in the number of Spanish women in Potosí. Those from the lower classes worked in the taverns, markets, and homes as domestic servants. They did not live in the best part of town, which was reserved for elite Spaniards.<sup>134</sup> Upper class Spanish/*Criollo* women came in much smaller numbers, usually following their male relatives who were bureaucrats, officers of the crown, or wealthy mine owners. Susan Migden Socolow states that the number of Spanish women coming to America reached 16.5 percent in the mid-1500s; by the end of that century the number rose to 28-40 percent. Around 2,900 women from Spain are believed to have arrived in Spanish America per year, between 1500-1700.<sup>135</sup>

In regard to indigenous women and children working in jobs related to the silver mines in Potosí, Bakewell indicates that very little is found in the records. He cites Luis Capoché's *Relación* in which this colonial Potosí miner and chronicler states that indigenous women did not work inside the mines. When these women and their children came to Potosí following their *mitayo* husbands, they usually worked in the cleaning and crashing of ores in the refineries or manually shifting ores in the *ingenios* when there were not enough male natives to take care of those tasks. Sometimes, native women and their children looked for small pieces of ore that had been left on the ground and sold them. However, the main occupation of native women was cleaning and cooking for their husbands who worked in the mines; sometimes they cooked for other miners for a fee. This extra income was

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<sup>134</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 86.

<sup>135</sup> Migden Socolow, *The Women*, 62.

necessary to make ends meet because what their husbands received as wages would not cover their daily expenses.<sup>136</sup>

Potosí, with its large and diverse population composed of indigenous mine workers, petty marketers, wealthy merchants, mine owners, clergy, and Crown officials, had grown into a destination for commerce and trade, not just regional but worldwide.<sup>137</sup> The *Villa* evolved from a rambling mining town into a populous city where job opportunities and prosperity were there for the taking. For such reasons, the city attracted all kind of people: honest, hard-working individuals but also opportunists, gamblers, and mercenaries. All of them were enticed by the promise of remaking themselves and advancing in society.<sup>138</sup>

### Mining in Potosí

“*El Cerro Rico*” (the rich mountain) of Potosí housed the richest veins of silver in the world. The Potosí mines were able to supply the precious metal in large quantities, at a time when an increased demand for gold and silver was happening in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>139</sup> When looking up from the *Villa*, the mountain, sprinkled with discarded ores, seemed to be engulfed in a reddish glow.<sup>140</sup>

“The Cerro and the Imperial town of Potosí are situated in cold terrain

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<sup>136</sup> Capoche, *Relación*, 37, in Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 104, 139.

<sup>137</sup> Thompson, Sinclair, Rossana Barragan, Xavier Algo, Seemin Qayum, and Mark Goodale, eds., *The Bolivia Reader*, History, Culture, Politics. Duke University Press, 2018, 73.

<sup>138</sup> *The Bolivia Reader*, 73.

<sup>139</sup> Tandeter, *Coercion and Market*, 5-6.

<sup>140</sup> Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 8.

that receives much snow, is sterile and unproductive, and almost uninhabitable because of its unpleasant and nasty climate. Before the Cerro was discovered, nobody lived there, on account of the displeasing nature of the place.”<sup>141</sup>

Without the *Cerro* there was no Potosí. The silver produced in the mines was the imaginary fountainhead from which good and evil trickled down into the *Villa*.<sup>142</sup> The *Cerro* housed the mines, the mines burst with silver, the silver created immense wealth, the wealth allowed *Potosinos* to enjoy abundance and comfort. But the wealth also brought about a wide array of human suffering, unending civil wars, violence, and death. Although Arzáns’ main interest was chronicling Potosí, its society, and its people, it would have been impossible for him to do it without including information about the *Cerro* and the mining operations in his work. After all, Potosí rose to fame due to the discovery of vast amounts of silver and experienced decline when the silver production decreased. Arzáns dedicates a whole chapter in the *Historia* to the introduction of mercury in the refining process, which greatly improved silver production in 1571.<sup>143</sup>

The Spaniards became aware of the *Cerro* and its mines in 1545, but those silver deposits were known to the indigenous people in the region, before and after

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<sup>141</sup> Capoche, *Relación, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Tomo CXXII, (Madrid, 1959), 75.

<sup>142</sup> Between 1545 and 1745 the Spanish mined 40,000 tons of silver in the Americas, from *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe*, Stanley J. Stein, and Barbara H. Stein (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 21. Kris Lane indicates that between 1545 and 1823 colonial tax records show that Potosí produced 22,695 metric tons of silver. This was just a baseline figure that represented a large share of global silver production for the period. From Kris Lane, “Potosí Mines”, (May 4, 2015, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, Retrieved July 12, 2023).

<sup>143</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 142-144.

the Incas began ruling; however, the native population did not share what they knew about the silver deposits with the Europeans. The silver in Potosí was not mined in an organized fashion until the Spaniards mounted a large operation there. Lane indicates that it would not have been unusual for the Incas not to share information about the site of rich mines, and that they would have been probably aware of the silver in the *Cerro* because of the reddish color of the mountain. He adds that the Incas probably did not mine in Potosí due to respect of the religious rituals in the area.<sup>144</sup> Prior to the conquest, the Incas had an operating mine system in Porco and Huancavelica.<sup>145</sup> In the pre-Columbian period, Porco was the biggest silver mine where indigenous people extracted the mineral; it continued to produce silver, but not at the level of Potosí, after the Conquest. The silver from the Porco mines was used to decorate the Coricancha temple in Cusco.<sup>146</sup> Huancavelica produced cinnabar, which later would be the main source for the mercury that would be essential in improving the process of silver amalgamation in Potosí. Both the Inca and the Spaniards placed high value in precious metals such as gold and silver because their possession equated wealth, obviously, but also because they displayed power and legitimation. According to historian Mary Van Buren, “In general, precious metals were used by the Inca for ritual purposes such as the

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<sup>144</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 24.

<sup>145</sup> Porco is located 36 kms to southwest of Potosí. Huancavelica is 2,000 kms to the north of Potosí.

<sup>146</sup> Micahel A. Malpass and Sonia Alconi, *Distant Provinces in the Inka Empire: Toward a Deeper Understanding of Inka Imperialism*. (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2010), 174.

fabrication of figurines and vessels employed in offerings, as well as objects that were given to conquered rulers as part of a system of state reciprocity.”<sup>147</sup>

The *Cerro* is located at approximately 2.5 miles from the *Villa* and towers almost 16,000 ft over it. The mountain had abundant veins, which produced the finest silver ores.

The high amount of silver in the mines, plus the technology used to extract it, managed to produce high levels in the sixteenth century. Those two factors were also the unsought outcome of rapid depletion of silver in the *Cerro*. Silver mining began in Potosí in 1545, and it eventually became the richest silver lode in the world. When the indigenous population mined in different areas of the Inca empire prior the arrival of the Spaniards, they would use wind furnaces –*guayras*-- to refine metals, including silver. When the large deposits of silver were discovered in Potosí, the *guayras* continued to be used for the smelting process; however, this system works well only in ores of high concentration, and, unfortunately, the rich deposits of Potosí became depleted by 1560. This created a severe dip in revenues for the Spanish crown, but good fortune did not completely abandon the Spanish side because a new viceroy arrived at Perú in 1569 who would display the aptitude to solve the problem.

He was Francisco de Toledo, and his reforms and innovations in several areas of government benefited the management of the Viceroyalty; two of his reforms to

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<sup>147</sup> Mary Van Buren, “The Persistence of Indigenous Silver Production in Porco, Bolivia”, *International Journal of Historical Archeology*, 25:45-64, (May 23, 2020).

the mining operations created a boom period for the industry in Potosí. The first one was the replacement of the traditional *guayras*, which worked adequately for the first twenty years after the Europeans began mining in Potosí when the ores were very rich. Toledo devised the implementation of a new technique of amalgamation, which used mercury to extract silver from low grade ores; this would have been impossible using the old wind furnaces. After this change, the revenues from silver grew rapidly. But even with the addition of new technology, it became obvious that to keep the same level of production, more labor was necessary. This issue was solved by other of Toledo's reforms that improved the silver output in Potosí: the reintroduction of the *Mita*, the system of compulsory labor structure previously used in the Inca empire, which would guarantee a constant and adequate supply of indigenous workers to keep up with the new technology and the high amounts of silver being mined.<sup>148</sup>

Notwithstanding all these changes, by mid-seventeenth century silver production was dwindling, and prosperity began to decline in Potosí. Decaying infrastructure and falling yields created social tensions in Potosí, mainly the civil wars among different factions over the control of the *Villa* and the mining operations.<sup>149</sup> The highest silver production from the *Cerro* happened between 1581 and 1590, with a peak production of 44,000 pounds, a level never reached

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<sup>148</sup> Kendal W. Brown, *A History of Mining in Latin America: From the Colonial Era to the Present*, (University of New Mexico Press: 2012), 19-20.

<sup>149</sup> Cole, *The Potosí Mita*, 8-9, 50.

again in colonial times; it began declining between 1651 and 1660, reaching the lowest levels in 1721-1730, with a slight recovery towards the end of the 1700s.<sup>150</sup>

Due to the necessity to keep up with the output and profits from the mines, technology inside and around them was constantly revised and improved, such as “the coordination of an elaborate system of dams and hydraulic works to power ore-crushing mills and to insure the supply of mercury from Huancavelica which was crucial for the amalgamation process used to extract silver from raw ore. Wealthy merchants also provided credit to mine owners for private investments in the capital-intensive and volatile industry.”<sup>151</sup> Yet, no considerations were made regarding the bettering of working and life conditions for the miners and their families. Many Europeans made fortunes not just on the endless pouring of silver from the mines but also on the continuous supply of indigenous labor.

Fray Diego de Ocaña vividly described his impression after visiting one of the mines in the *Cerro*: “To go inside [the mine] is to see a picture of hell because there are so many deep caves, so many lights all around, and the sound of so many blasting noises. It makes a man lose his good judgement, even his senses.”<sup>152</sup> Working in the mines was unsafe, to say the least, and formal safety regulations were almost non-existent. Those working in the mines and refineries were exposed to fatal diseases caused by dust particles raised during the crashing of ores, which

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<sup>150</sup> Tandeter, *Coercion and Market*, 2.

<sup>151</sup> Thompson, Sinclair, Rossana Barragán, Xavier Albó, Seemin Qayum, and Mark Goodale, eds., *The Bolivia Reader, History, Culture, Politics*, (Duke University Press, 2018) 71.

<sup>152</sup> de Ocaña, *Viaje por el Nuevo Mundo*, 257.

damaged the lungs, causing respiratory illnesses such as silicosis (silica damage to the lungs). This disease has been found in the examination of the remains of colonial mine workers in Perú, in the nearby city of Arequipa where mummified bodies were preserved due to low humidity in the region. Poisoning from dangerous lead vapors given off during the smelting process, or from mercury vapors occurring in the amalgamation, proved also to be deadly. Fatal accidents were also a common occurrence inside the mines' dangerous passages where miners fell often from high places when climbing to reach the silver deposits. Notwithstanding the fatalities, their exact numbers are not available since they were never accurately reported by the officials in charge.<sup>153</sup>

#### A City of Contrasts: Piety and Decadence

Since its foundation, Potosí was always a city where violence and vice were a constant presence. It is frequently described as a city where prostitution, gambling, and overindulgences were the regular recreational activities of many of its inhabitants. In the harsh climate of the region, working in the silver mines and its related businesses was taxing for the human body. The consumption of stimulants, alcoholic (wine, *chicha*) and non-alcoholic (*yerba mate*, hot chocolate, *coca* leaves, tobacco) reached extremely high levels.

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<sup>153</sup> Bakewell, *Miners*, 145-151, and also in Marvin J. Allison, "Paleopathology in Perú", *Natural History*, 88:2 (1979), 74-82, in Bakewell, *Miners*, 150.

Lane indicates that both *chicha* and *coca* were a “vice and a necessity,” especially for those working in the mines. Those stimulants helped them since *chicha* was also a source of calories, being made of maize, and *coca* being a hunger suppressant.<sup>154</sup> According to Accarette du Biscay, a traveler who chronicled his visit to Potosí in the mid-1600s, the stimulant effects of the *coca* were also appreciated by some ladies in the *Villa*, --wives of nobles and respectable citizens, as he describes them. Although those ladies were kept confined in their homes even more than they were in Spain, only leaving to go to mass or to attend public festivities, somehow they were able to consume *coca* enthusiastically.<sup>155</sup>

Gambling houses, brothels, and taverns were always full of customers. In fact, Potosí had --per capita-- more of those establishments than any other city in the Spanish Empire. Debauchery and excess ran rampant in the city, says Lane.<sup>156</sup> “There are 700 or 800 men, more rather than less, who were idle, and whose occupation was ambling and gambling, and there are 120 women (respectable dressed) in shawls and petticoats, who are openly known to occupy themselves in the same business.”<sup>157</sup> In the early days of Potosí, gambling dens were established prior to churches, usually in the same buildings of houses of prostitution. All kinds of men were frequent customers in the gambling houses, from rich miners and

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<sup>154</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 58, 60.

<sup>155</sup> Accarette du Biscay, *Viajes*, 42.

<sup>156</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 1, 2, 93.

<sup>157</sup> “Description of the Villa and the Mines of Potosí in the year of 1603”. Anonymous, in José Urbano Martínez Carreras, ed. *Relaciones Geográficas de Indias-Perú*, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 183, (Madrid: Atlas, 1965), in Lane, *Potosí*, 93.

merchants to even members of the church.<sup>158</sup> However popular (card games in particular) gambling was in the *Villa*, Padden states that there were more brothels than gambling houses in Potosí.<sup>159</sup> Guamán Poma de Ayala describes a conversation among a group of native prostitutes in which they talked about going to cities like Lima, Cuzco, Potosí, where the Spaniard and Black customers would pay them. If they were to die in any of those places, the women added, they hoped it would be with a Spaniard, since they preferred that to dying with a *mitayo*.<sup>160</sup>

Potosí was a Catholic city, an example of Baroque Christian piety. By the seventeenth century, there were a large number of priests tending to their congregation in the *Villa's* 29 churches. There were also 6 *beateríos* (places where pious women –*beatas*-- lived apart from the world), and several chapels and shrines.<sup>161</sup> References to God and the Virgin Mary appear in almost every page of the *Historia*, where many of its historical accounts describe how the *Potosinos* were generous with their donations of time and money to the churches, and also how they showed their devotion by attending church regularly and by invoking divine protection by praying to the patron saints they assigned to the *Cerro*, St. Augustine, and to the *Villa*: the Apostle Santiago, St. Bárbara, and *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*. *Potosinos* believed that there was a strong connection between their behavior and the ills (floods, earthquakes, storms) that occasionally fell on the city:

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<sup>158</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 109-110

<sup>159</sup> Padden, *Tales of Potosí*, XXIV.

<sup>160</sup> Guamán Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Governance*, Translated by David Frye, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 245.

<sup>161</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 2.

piety would avert them, sin would cause them. These disasters were deeply feared because they meant more than just the destruction of their houses, because they caused the ruin of their livelihood if the mines ceased their operations. Likewise, *Potosinos* believed that good deeds and devotion would be rewarded by God intervening and sending blessings to the city and its people. Many of the historical accounts in the *Historia* refer to miracles that people witnessed, as proof of God's love for them and their city.<sup>162</sup>

Since the discovery of its large silver deposits, Potosí managed to have a special place in the world. Everybody heard about the *Villa*, not just in Europe but also in places as far as the Middle East and Asia. Lane outlines in vivid detail the many and contradictory ways the city has been defined:

“Potosí has been described variously as a marvel of renaissance technology, an environmental hellhole, a hub of regional development, and a worst-case example of an export enclave. Others had described it as a space for native self-fashioning and social mobility, a stage for outbursts of pathological violence, a surprisingly normal Spanish city in a high desert setting, and a Baroque dystopia. Scholars of the eighteenth century have alternatively called Potosí a rare Bourbon reform success story and a blatant Bourbon failure.<sup>163</sup>

Violence is a common occurrence in boomtown settings. Potosí was not the exception. In a city where quick fortunes were made, the law was not always enforced properly, and crowded with people from different nationalities, ethnicities, and social status, violence was surely going to erupt. Thefts, murders, sexual crimes, duels, and civil wars among various regional groups of Spaniards were all

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<sup>162</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 9, 95.

<sup>163</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 3.

daily occurrences in the *Villa*. At the same time that the glory of Potosí was celebrated when describing the technological advances of the mining industry and the conspicuous display of wealth among its citizens, it was impossible not to also acknowledge the lawless and reckless behavior of male *Potosinos*. Idle soldiers, miners, merchants, and traders with grievances, gamblers with debts, cheated husbands, dishonored fathers. Any of them would have not hesitated to engage in violent acts to solve their claims. When legal and proper ways of solving them did not work or were sometimes not even attempted, men grabbed their weapons to fight their opponents in duels or street brawls that sometimes lasted several days and involved large numbers of people. If Potosí was the richest city in the world, it was also one of the most violent.

### Potosí's Population

After its foundation in 1545, Potosí kept continuously growing in population. The silver, flowing abundantly from the *Cerro*, was an effective lure that attracted a numerous and diverse population from all over the world, mostly men. Those were the men who had joined the Spanish crown military forces in search of fame and fortune, the members of the Church who had the mission of converting the native population to the Catholic faith, and men who saw the opportunity of improving their fortunes working in the mines or other undertakings related to the mining business. Since Columbus' discovery, European explorers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were captivated by the possibility of laying their hands on the treasures of *El Dorado*, a city made of gold, hidden in the new-found lands across the Atlantic. Many

European fortune-hunters, lured by the tales of immense riches of those who returned from the New World, decided themselves to make the long journey in search of, if not *El Dorado*, some other places that could offer them the opportunities that they were not able to enjoy in their homelands. Jesuit José de Acosta, who travelled extensively in colonial Mexico and Perú, spoke of the dangerous lure that the findings of silver and gold hold over many European men: "The power of silver, desire for which draws all other things to itself, has populated that mountain with the largest number of inhabitants in all those realms."<sup>164</sup>

Genuine opportunities for betterment made Potosí a city that was not like many other cities of the time, either in America or Europe; Potosi grew gradually from a small settlement into a big city over time during the period (1545-1737) covered by Arzáns in his *Historia*. The population of Potosí, according to the census ordered by Viceroy Toledo (Viceroy of Perú from 1569 to 1580) in 1572, was 120,000 inhabitants. According to another census in 1650, there were 160,000 people living in the *Villa*.<sup>165</sup> These numbers are striking as we can see if we compare Potosí, a mining town perched high in the Andes, to other cities in Europe and the Americas during the same time: Paris had 150,000 inhabitants in the 1500s, London 100,000 in 1550, Mexico City --the biggest city in colonial Spanish America-- in the early 1600s had between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants. The famous explorer Hiram Bingham, discoverer of the Inca city of *Machu Pichu*, visited Potosí in

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<sup>164</sup> de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History*, 173.

<sup>165</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 10.

the early 1900s, and he wrote about this experience and how he was impressed by the size of the *Villa*: “At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when New York and Boston were still undreamed of, Potosí was already a large and extremely wealthy city” ... “If it were not for the great expanse of ruins and the very large number of churches, it would be difficult to realize today that for over a century this was the largest city in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>166</sup>

In the same way that population grew following the discovery of silver and the mining boom that ensued, when silver production went down population also went down; natural disasters such as heavy snowstorms, hail, and copious rains that caused floods and broken dams ravaged the city, causing a decline in population also.<sup>167</sup> In the first quarter of the 1700s, after several of those tragic incidents, population in the *Villa* was around 50,000 with more than 20,000 losing their lives to different diseases as well, such as influenza and plague, that afflicted at the city and that probably arrived in European merchant ships and travelled to the highlands with visitors.<sup>168</sup>

The population of Potosí was diverse, eclectic. People from many countries in Europe, and even from more remote places such as the Middle East and Asia, were making a living in Potosí. The possibility of becoming rich attracted all kind of individuals of questionable and unquestionable character, this was very much alike

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<sup>166</sup> Hiram Bingham, *Across South America*, (Lector House, USA, 2019), 67.

<sup>167</sup> For a detailed information about natural disasters, diseases and epidemics and their effect in population fluctuation in Potosí, see Noble David Cook's *Demographic Collapse: Indian Perú, 1520-1620* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981), 238,239.

<sup>168</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 152.

to what happened in the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s. People from different nations around the world were transforming Potosí into a global city; however, most of its inhabitants throughout its existence were not foreigners but indigenous people. Mangan states that during the last three decades of the 16th century “you could find in Potosí Indians and Spaniards, rich and poor and everything in between.”<sup>169</sup> The breakdown of the 160,000 (“the zenith of Potosí’s population, according to Mangan”),<sup>170</sup> living in Potosí according to the 1650 census, for instance, is described in the *Historia* as follows: 76,000 Indigenous people (from Potosí and other provinces), 3,000 *Criollos* born in Potosí, 35,000 *Criollos* from different parts of America, 40,000 Spaniards and other Europeans, and 6,000 Blacks, mulattos, zambos (a person of mixed indigenous and African ancestry).<sup>171</sup>

Although this work focuses on masculinity, piety and violence, and my investigation would center on the *Criollo* and European groups, a description of who the people who lived in Potosí were is nevertheless essential to fully understand societal dynamics in Potosí.

a. Native Population in Potosí

There was no Potosí until the silver was discovered in 1545. At the time, the Inca were the rulers in the region, and they were already taking advantage of the abundance of mineral resources in their realm: silver, gold, mercury, copper.

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<sup>169</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 18

<sup>170</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 18

<sup>171</sup> Arzánz, *Historia*, I, 286

However, it seems that for unknown reasons, the Inca did not mine the silver in Potosí prior to the 1545 discovery, probably because the Inca considered the *Cerro* a sacred site, a place that was visited by the indigenous population to honor their deities and ancestors, but not to extract the silver. Kendal W. Brown states that if the silver veins of the *Cerro* were known to the indigenous population around Potosí, they kept it secret until 1545.<sup>172</sup> The prevailing narrative of the discovery of silver in Potosí suggests that it took place when a young native man, supposedly trying to find his lost llama on the slopes of the *Cerro*, saw some rocks that showed large silver content. Arzáns offers a different version about the Inca refusal to mine the *Cerro*, also including a possible explanation for the name given to the mountain. He mentions an event that supposedly happened in 1462, several decades before the accepted date of silver discovery in Potosí, stating that Inca officials from the nearby mining city of *Porco* decided to send a group of natives to see if the *Cerro* had as much silver deposits as some thought. Some of those natives went inside the *Cerro* with their tools to work on the silver veins. While inside, they could hear a frightful rumble that shook the mountain. The terrified natives left the *Cerro* as quickly as possible and returned to *Porco*. While trying to describe what they had witnessed, they used the Quechua word “*poctosi*” that means rumble in Quechua.<sup>173</sup>

The Inca empire was the beneficiary of the ample source of revenue brought in by mineral deposits from the mines of *Porco* --which at the time was the main

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<sup>172</sup> Brown, *A History of Mining*, 16.

<sup>173</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 27.

source of silver in Perú until the discovery of Potosí-- and *Huancavelica*, a site rich with mercury that proved to be very important in the amalgamation processing of silver in Potosí. However, nothing compared to the immense wealth that the Potosí silver offered to the Spanish crown. And, before or after the Conquest, the ones who benefited from the silver in Potosí were the Inca empire and the Spanish empire, respectively, not the indigenous population.

In the Potosí region, the native population were mainly the Aymara and the Quechua, with a small number of other indigenous groups as the Qaraqaras and the Charkas.<sup>174</sup> The indigenous population grew quickly after the discovery of silver; in 1545 it was 3,000, in 1561 between 30,000 and 50,000 (this increase reflects the installation of the *Mita* system by Viceroy Toledo), and 76,000 in 1611.<sup>175</sup>

Francisco de Toledo was Viceroy of Perú from 1569 until 1581, and “... the only one occupying such position that visited Potosí in its heyday.”<sup>176</sup> His visit in 1572 was an extraordinary event in Potosí, and as such it was described in strong details in the *Historia*.<sup>177</sup> This visit was an extreme honor for this city; traveling a long distance from the capital of the Viceroyalty, Lima, to isolated, far away Potosí must have been an incredible feat at the time. This goes to prove the importance of Potosí and its silver for the crown. When Viceroy Toledo arrived in Potosí, the silver production was dwindling; there was still an abundance of silver in the *Cerro*, but

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<sup>174</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 27.

<sup>175</sup> Noble David Cook, *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520-1620*, (Cambridge University Press: 1981), 245.

<sup>176</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 90.

<sup>177</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 145-155.

the outdated methods used to process the silver after the extraction were not suitable to maintain producing high levels of the mineral. Viceroy Toledo addressed these issues and implemented a series of changes that fundamentally improved the silver production. His reforms were described as ingenious and were designed to boost "... precious metals extractions in order to advance the project of the Spanish monarchy: defense and spread of the Roman Catholic faith."<sup>178</sup> All these targets were extremely important --not just for Viceroy Toledo but to the Spanish colonial officials as a whole--regarding the profitable and righteous administration of the Spanish possessions in the New World. To achieve those goals, Toledo made substantial changes to both the operational and refining processes with the implementation of new technology, mainly the use of mercury for the amalgamation, and also the construction of reservoirs to power the refineries. Regarding the human side of the mining operations, the introduction of the *Mita* was undoubtedly designed to create a steady supply of labor in the mines. Toledo helped recreate the bountifulness and riches in Potosí, but at the same time his reforms were disastrous for the native population recruited to perform hard labor in the mines. The *Mita* proved as devastating as diseases and plagues as regards to the disruption of indigenous lives who had to abandon their villages to go work in the Potosí mines. According to Lane, "Thanks to Toledo, it [the Imperial *Villa*] was one

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<sup>178</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 67.

of the most populous urban conglomerations on the planet, possibly the first great factory town of the modern world.”<sup>179</sup>

According to Bowser, once the Spaniards settled in Perú and realized they would need human labor to work in the mines and fields, they decided the large native population would be useful to supply it. While the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church did not support the abuse of the natives or their exploitation for economic gain, the Spaniards who had developed monetary interests in Perú thought otherwise, and although they would not express their point of view openly, they clearly understood that their business would not succeed and profit without the cheap labor the native population could provide. The plight of the natives -- supported by people like Bartolomé de las Casas-- reached the rulers in Spain; however, the economic benefits were so great that the Crown decided that it was essential “...to channel native manpower into the development of the colony, but with a minimum of harshness towards the natives and a maximum of government control.”<sup>180</sup>

Claims were made at the time that natives were better suited to work in the mines than enslaved Africans who did not fare well in the harsh, cold climate of the highlands. Bowser indicates that although the natives were accustomed to living high in the Andes, the work in the mines was demanding for everybody, not just the African people. The true reason of opting for native labor over slave labor was a

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<sup>179</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 91.

<sup>180</sup> Bowser, *The African Slave*, 12.

monetary one: enslaved individuals were expensive while indigenous people were ready for use in large numbers; financial gain was the main concern of the mine operators.<sup>181</sup> This desire for financial gain on the part of the people in the mining business in Potosí clearly clashed with the aspirations of members of the Catholic Church and many of the Crown officials who understood that their responsibility was to treat the native population with dignity; this collision, sometimes, also happened in the latter group. While a follower of Bartolomé de las Casas, the Dominican Domingo de Santo Tomás described Potosí as “the entrance to hell,”<sup>182</sup> some Mercedarian friars dispute that assessment, stating that natives in Potosí enjoyed better working conditions and were in better health than those in Cuzco; sometimes Crown officials held the belief that natives, being naturally inclined to drinking, idleness, and vices, could benefit from keeping busy working in the mines. The *Mita* presented a conundrum even for the Spanish king who supposedly struggled with its introduction in the Americas. Lane indicates that “some historians have suggested that Phillip II was torn by the decision to uproot thousands of native subjects in the name of mineral treasure, but in the end, he did not stop Toledo.”<sup>183</sup>

Arzáns, like the majority of his fellow *Potosinos*, was fully aware that the colonizing of Perú and the reaping of the wealth of the American lands would not be

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<sup>181</sup> Bowser, *The African Slave*, 13, 14.

<sup>182</sup> José María Vargas, *Fr. Domingo de Santo Tomás, defensor y apóstol de los indios del Perú: Su vida y sus escritos*, (Quito: Editorial Santo Domingo, 1937, 15-21. From Lane, *Potosí*, 31-32.

<sup>183</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 75.

possible without the natives; the number of the Spaniards was always smaller in comparison to the large native population that could be used to support the colonizing project; he was also, like many others in Potosí, a pious, devout Catholic. This created a conflict between the need of the city and the personal needs of its citizens and the consideration and respect for the needs of the native population. The good intentions that Arzáns and many of the Spaniards and *Criollos* probably had about trying to find --impossibly, perhaps-- a balance between the two propositions is displayed throughout the *Historia*, where frequent showings of positive attitudes towards the natives could be found. Arzáns rejects the idea that natives were “brutos incapaces de razón.” However, this seemingly positive comment about the natives of Perú is followed by another that illustrates his ambivalent feelings towards the indigenous people in which he states that the charge that natives are brainless and incapable of reasonings is a lie, spread by enemies of Spain in order to diminish the importance of Cortés’ victory over the native population; Arzáns does not indicate that beyond the lies of those jealous for the successful and fast conquest of Perú, in his personal experience, the natives are not actually the individuals described by Spain’s foes. He also manifests a condescending attitude when he states that natives cannot read or write not because they cannot learn how to perform these activities but because they do not apply themselves.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Arzáns, *Historia* I, 15, 20.

Arzáns is more genuine with his praises about the work of indigenous people as artists; he says their admirable pieces of art could be seen in churches and buildings and in the wood carvings that decorated temples in Potosí. He also admires the way they are capable of crafting architectural elements inside and outside buildings without any knowledge of geometry or arithmetic.<sup>185</sup> However, when it comes to the subject of the *Mita*, the forced labor imposed on the natives, he strongly expresses his objection to it while at the same time he seems to join the ambivalent view of most of the Spanish people in Potosí and in Spain: he was torn between the compassion he felt towards the natives and the need to keep the silver production high and the *Cerro* alive and well. He understands the *Mita* is disruptive, cruel, and immoral but he also recognizes that the glory of Potosí is tied to the silver industry that requires high levels of labor, cheap labor, constantly, to make it efficient and profitable. "Certainly, I am confused, I cannot decide to defend this calamity the natives suffer with the *mita* or support it in the name of universal good because, without the *mita*, nobody will work in the mines because nobody could do such work, neither the Spaniards and their sons born in America nor the Black Africans, and then everything will be lost."<sup>186</sup>

#### b. Black Population in Potosí

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<sup>185</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 16; *Historia*, I, 20.

<sup>186</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 189.

According to the 1650 census, Black Africans in Potosí had less than ten percent of the native population and were around four percent of the city's total population; however, they appear often in the *Historia*. That number for the African population was probably the highest reached in Potosí; in the 1758 census, taken when the Potosí silver production was plunging, the population of Africans had dipped to a little over 3,200. In Potosí, enslaved Black male slaves were employed, albeit in very small numbers, in the Potosí Mint and in mining-related businesses such as silver refining; still, the majority were household slaves, sometimes managing the estates of wealthy owners. Enslaved Black females worked in traditional domestic jobs such as cooking, nursing, etc. As was usual in other places of Spanish America, having slaves gave the owners an aura of power and affluence, and the wealthy people of Potosí used enslaved Blacks in the same way they were displaying their rich possessions openly around the city; African enslaved people became part of the performance of parading their finery. However, slaves from Africa were not just working for the Potosí Spanish establishment; some members of the Inca elite, who prior to the Conquest were attended by large number of servants, joined the Europeans in the use of enslaved Blacks to tend to their household needs and to parade them around town, as proof that they were still of prominent status in colonial society.<sup>187</sup>

In the Spanish society of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the outlook on slavery and its key function in the economy was sometimes supported by the idea

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<sup>187</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 88.

that enslavement was permissible because societies should take into consideration that some people --or group of peoples-- were more important than others as regards to the advancement of social order. Religion was part of this prejudiced stance because, they claimed, they were merely following the “natural order of things” formulated by God.<sup>188</sup> This way of thinking clashed with the Christian humanism standard of conduct thus creating an ambivalence regarding slavery, which presented a quandary similar to the ambivalence above described regarding the *Mita* system. However, the economic opportunities in the Americas were enormous, the mines were so rich, the fields, fertile with previously unknown crops, so productive, that no philosophical considerations were going to get in the way of the colonizers’ destiny of grandeur because wealth would not only allow them access to life comforts but also power and status.<sup>189</sup>

Lane states that the first enslaved Africans arrived at the Andes in small numbers together with the *Conquistadores*; most of these slaves were from the West Central Africa region. Those numbers were increased in Potosí after the silver mining boom when slaves came to be an important factor of the city’s economy.<sup>190</sup> In Perú, a considerable number of enslaved Blacks could be found in coastal, urban areas where they were used to replace, in large part, the native labor because the

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<sup>188</sup>Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, “El Trabajo Indígena en los Andes: Teorías del Siglo XVI”, 19-44, *Historia económica y pensamiento social. Estudios en homenaje a Diego Mateo del Peral*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983, 22-23, in Ann Zulawski, *They Eat from Their Labor: Work and social change in Colonial Bolivia*. (University of Pittsburg Press, 1995), 30.

<sup>189</sup> Zulawski, *They Eat from Their Labor*, 30.

<sup>190</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 64.

native population was being reduced by diseases and the hardship of the working conditions in the mines, for instance. The jobs enslaved Blacks were performing in agriculture, sugar mills, and vineyards was becoming vital to keep the food supply running efficiently.<sup>191</sup>

Blacks are frequently present in the *Historia*; many times, they are at the center of crimes or evil deeds.<sup>192</sup> And often they are not kindly portrayed, especially regarding how abusive they were towards the natives. Yet, there is also condemnation of the exploitation of enslaved Africans the hand of the owners.<sup>193</sup> The *Historia* denounces this abuse, however not as loud as when it exposes the mistreatment of the native population.

Bowser states that his decision to examine the slave presence in colonial Perú was motivated by the fact that while there was an abundant number of studies produced in the second half of the twentieth century about enslaved Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States, Brazil, and the Caribbean, not many works could be found about slavery in Spanish American mainland during

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<sup>191</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 87.

<sup>192</sup> For examples of these kind of tales see Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 40- 41: Lady using her Black slave to facilitate encounters with lovers. He would later blackmail her. *Historia*, II, 207-213: One of the most sensational crimes in Potosí in which a lady ordered two of her Black slaves to murder her husband. *Historia*, II, 148: Story of a notorious, villainous Black slave nicknamed “El Duende” [ghost] who caused havoc in the *Villa* until he was captured and garroted. See also Kris Lane article: “The Ghost of Seventeenth-Century Potosí: An Autopsy”, *The Americas*, Vol. 76, No. 2, April 2019, 327-350.

<sup>193</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 129, 132.

the same period.<sup>194</sup> The *Historia* offers a rare and vivid glimpse on the role of African people in society in the Spanish American colonies.

### c. Criollo Population in Potosí

*Criollo*, a term that at the time was coined to indicate that a person was of Spanish ancestry, not born in Spain but in the Americas, was used to differentiate people in Potosí from those who had been born in Spain who would have been called *peninsulares*, or *chapetones* if they were new arrivals in the colonies. However, Lockhart offers another explanation: in the sixteenth century, the words *creole* or *criollo* were also used to describe enslaved Blacks, those who were born in Perú and other parts of the Spanish global colonies as opposed to those born in Africa that were called *bozales*. During the 1560s those words were applied for the first time in Perú, by chroniclers like Arzáns.<sup>195</sup> We found the same explanation for the origin of the word *criollo* in Garcilaso de la Vega's *Royal Commentary of the Incas*<sup>196</sup> and in Graubart's *With our Labor and Sweat*.<sup>197</sup> Although Arzáns identifies himself as *criollo*, he also respected and upheld the ideals of his Spanish heritage; indeed, he signaled the high value he placed in the fact he was born in Perú, and he and his fellow *criollos* were not simply members of a lesser stratum in society.

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<sup>194</sup> Bowser, *The African Slave*, vii.

<sup>195</sup> Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 198.

<sup>196</sup> El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *First Part of the Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, (Madrid, Nicolas Rodrigues Franco, 1723 [1609]), 339-340, in Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City, Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*. (Duke University Press, Durham, 2012), 57-58.

<sup>197</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 147-148.

Instead, he states that they are, as a group as important as any other regional faction --or nation as he calls them-- from Spain such as Andalusian, Basque, Extremaduran, etc.

At times, he seems not to be very comfortable with the use of the term *criollo*: “the nation they vulgarly call *criolla*.”<sup>198</sup> Perhaps he considered it demeaning because of its origin and association with enslaved Black Africans. He defines *criollos* as “...Spaniards of the Indies”<sup>199</sup> and sometimes “*peruanos* (who are called *criollos*),”<sup>200</sup> this may be an attempt on his part to avoid using *criollos* because it is “vulgar.”<sup>201</sup> Regardless of what Arzáns felt about the origin and use of the term *criollo*, he frequently states how he felt he was a *criollo*, and the virtues this implied. He described the *criollos* in the *Villa* as intelligent and knowledgeable in scholarly subjects such as grammar, philosophy, and theology, educated in the great universities of Perú; altruists and civilized, and illustrious.<sup>202</sup> There was also a state of mind associated to the *criollo* identity: a deep sentiment that grew over time signifying that when compared to Spanish *Peninsulares*, *criollos* were “authentic, capable of self-determination.”<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 126.

<sup>199</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 182.

<sup>200</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 186.

<sup>201</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 166.

<sup>202</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 126; II, 333; III, 377.

<sup>203</sup> Graubart, *With our Labor and Sweat*, 21, 191. Graubart speaks about the creolization of colonial Latin America and also argues that before “*criollo*” began being used to describe those born in America to Spanish parents it was used to define the origin of African Slaves.

The *Historia* describes how *criollos* were despised by the government officials who usually favored those born in Spain over those born in Perú.<sup>204</sup> The Basques showed extreme hostility towards the *criollos*, which is fully covered during the events of the civil wars in Potosí (1622-1625). The aftermath of these wars did not put a complete end to the aggression between those groups who continually engaged in fighting.<sup>205</sup> This hatred between the Basques and the *criollos* is shown too in the actions of priests, judges, and government officials who often denied employment to *criollos*.<sup>206</sup>

#### d. Spanish Population in Potosí

Many of the Spanish conquistadores were not explorers. They came from high military ranks, or belonged to the aristocratic class; indeed, a preponderance usually hailed from different extractions in society. Some were from impoverished families, lower echelons of veterans from European wars, or from the lower nobility class. In either case those young men did not have the possibility of receiving an inheritance or a title, thus they were left to find their fortunes somewhere else. The newly discovered territories in America offered them the opportunity of making a fortune and advancing their standings in society. Clearly such kind of men generally were endowed with certain characteristics that would allow them to be successful in their adventures in the New World: they were daring, ruthless, and violent. The

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<sup>204</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 182, 185, 189, 220, 280.

<sup>205</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 216, 233, 245, 246.

<sup>206</sup> Hanke, *Introduction*, I, cxxxix.

Conquest of the New World offered them everything they would not be able to obtain in Spain; in Spanish America they could own land, become wealthy, and find glory and status. Surely, some Spaniards came for other purposes: the religious conversion of the native population, or to actually explore the new lands, for instance. However, when the news that extraordinary levels of silver had been found in Potosí reached the world, this would have decidedly attracted men motivated by an overwhelming desire of finding wealth quickly and at any cost.

#### e. Foreigners in Potosí

People of diverse nationalities lived and worked in colonial Potosí: “There is no region in the world that have not people coming to Potosí.”<sup>207</sup> Many times, when Arzáns mentions them, he just states the person in question is a foreigner, without indicating the country or origin. Other times, he is more specific: he mentions Germans as owners of mines, as actors in accounts about miracles, or being involved in fights and duels; Italians and Irish as fencing instructors; French as smugglers of silver and clothes; Flemish, owners of mines, one with the largest deposit of silver in the *Cerro* called *La Veta de los Flamencos* (the vein of the Flemish).<sup>208</sup>

Potosí was acting as a magnet, attracting people from all over the world because of the booming silver business that offered a bonanza of opportunities for those seeking access to never heard before levels of riches. The risks were many but

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<sup>207</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 175.

<sup>208</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 117; I, 393; II, 285; I, 75; I, 324; II, 416, 482; III, 24, 135, 201, 378; I, 63

the payoffs enormous. Many of those risktakers who decided to travel from faraway lands to claim a share of Potosí's silver boom were willing to risk their own lives or take other peoples' lives to achieve their goals. This extreme stance, as it is often and vividly displayed in the *Historia*, begot unrestrained behavior, outrageous violence. However, Potosí was a city of opportunities and also a place of contrasts where violence and piety walked together. The incredible wealth that the silver trade created touched almost everybody in the city, either those directly involved in the mining business, the ones earning a living in retail, the people selling wares in the markets, etc. However, the circulating wealth had sinful origin since it was born from the coerced and harrowing experiences of the *mitayos* working in the mines, which in turn would influence the devotion and piety as an act of atonement.

This contrasting view of Potosí was absent, somehow removed from some contemporary drawings or engravings of the city, such as in Cieza de León's black and white wood engraving that portrays the *Villa* as a quaint little town, with the huge *Cerro* looming in the horizon.<sup>209</sup> Not only Europeans created this kind of idealized representation of Potosí: *Tarihi-i Hind-i Garbi* is a late 1500s rare manuscript by an unknown Turkish traveler who wrote about his experiences in the Americas.<sup>210</sup> One of the illustrations in this the manuscript is a colorful drawing of Potosí, portraying the city as an almost paradisaical place; even the *Cerro* is colored

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<sup>209</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 10.

<sup>210</sup> Thomas D. Goodrich, "Tarihi-i Hind-i Garbi: An Ottoman Book on the New World", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Apr.-Jun., 1987, Vol. 107, No. 2, 317-319.

in a pastel green as it were a fertile location. Potosí looks like a place where anybody would like to live.

### Immense Wealth and Its Effect on Potosí

Potosí was a city of opportunity and also a place of contrasts. The incredible wealth the silver trade created touched almost everybody in the city, including those directly involved in the mining business, the ones earning a living in retail, the people selling wares in the markets, etc. However, the circulating wealth had a sinful origin since it was born from the coerced and harrowing experiences of the *mitayos* working in the mines.

Daily life in Potosí was harsh and dangerous, but the city also offered its inhabitants a multifaceted lifestyle. The mines generated abundant, unlimited wealth, and the way people lived their lives, the way they conducted their business, the way they worshiped, all were strongly influenced by the silver pouring from the mines in the *Cerro*. No event or behavior went untouched by the prosperity and corruption brought by the silver. Wealth and all its trappings were conspicuously displayed in Potosí. As unhealthy, inhospitable, and unpredictable as Potosí's environment was, *Potosinos* were nevertheless not lacking religious, artistic, and cultural avenues that helped them to endure the isolation and rudimentary living conditions. The large sums of money created by the silver trade allowed for the staging of magnificent festivals, building

of glittering churches, and provided the artistic enjoyment of books, theatrical performances, and creative activities such as painting.<sup>211</sup>

### Pageantry and Celebrations

*Potosinos* from all social classes enjoyed the pageantry and splendid displays in their everyday activities around the *Villa*. People dressed in lavish clothes and costumes, and attended the many *fiestas* (festivities, celebrations) that were frequently organized in the city, which included parades, sponsored bullfights, and traditional horse games. These *fiestas*, even in the turbulent times in the city during the decline of the silver production, were extremely opulent affairs: "... processions were grander, bullfights were bigger and better; everything was done more lavishly."<sup>212</sup> For the *Potosinos* it was important not just to be wealthy but instead they wanted to show it, to display it for everybody else to admire it because that

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<sup>211</sup> Colonial Potosí produced two famous painters: Melchor Pérez de Olguín, born in Cochabamba (actual Bolivia) in 1660 and died in Potosí in 1732, and Gaspar Miguel de Berrio, born in Potosí in 1706 and whose date of death is unknown. Both created religious paintings and other works that depicted the Potosí Arzáns describes in his *Historia*. Berrio, a native of Potosí, wanted, like Arzáns, to celebrate the glory and stature of his hometown. For more on Berrio and his work see Pilar María Díaz "Gaspar Miguel de Berrio and the Potosí School of Painting: Defining His Role and Importance in the Potosí School of Painting," PhD Dissertation, George Washington University, 2002, and also *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and the Angels in Viceregal Painting of Perú and Bolivia*. Center of Inter-American Relations, New York, November 12, 1985 to February 10, 1986. John Stringer, Director; Barbara Duncan, Curator; Teresa Gisbert, Guest Curator.

Lane indicates that many of Olguín's works are displayed today in the Potosí Mint Museum. *Potosí*, 155.

For additional works on these two painters, see Note 18, "Introduction" in this dissertation.

<sup>212</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 40.

would enhance their reputation as a successful individual, one who had arrived. This ostentation did not concern only the very rich; even those who were not wealthy splurged in showy clothes as much as their income allowed.<sup>213</sup>

Hanke states that if we could choose a reason that would better help us understand the mindset of the *Potosinos*, it most certainly would be the way in which they celebrated the *fiestas*.<sup>214</sup> In April 1716, the new Viceroy of Perú, Fray Diego Morcillo Rubio de Auñón, visited Potosí. Arzáns' description of the welcoming of the highest official in the colony, the person who was embodying the presence of the king, is an illustration of how this kind of crowded, opulent festival exhibited the grandeur of a city bursting with pride and affluence. Covering several pages in the *Historia*, the account of the eight-day-long celebration of the most important visit the *Villa* had ever received describes the dignitaries dressed in splendid clothes, wearing the jewels of their offices, and the streets and balconies around the city decorated with the finest hangings made of exquisite fabrics and beautiful paintings. Even the graceful women of Potosí were adding to the spectacle, dressed elegantly, and displaying an array of costly jewels. This extravagant affair was unlike any other ever seen in the city.<sup>215</sup>

In the Spanish world, the tradition of honoring momentous victories in battles, religious observances, the births and deaths in the royal family, etc., were widespread occurrences, even in the colonies in the New World. These celebrations

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<sup>213</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 15.

<sup>214</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 40.

<sup>215</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 42-53.

were lavish and elaborate and included a series of diverse functions such as parades, jousts, and tournaments. The Potosí celebrations were grander and more luxurious because of the abundance of money that the silver mines poured on private citizens and the coffers of the city. Sometimes, the *Potosinos* would even pave the streets of the *Villa* with silver bars, or so stories say.<sup>216</sup>

An example of the usual levels of extravagant consumption in Potosí during festivals, points out that in the city they only used the most expensive kind of wax, *cera blanca* (white wax) in convents, churches, and parades. In fact, *Potosinos* used in one month the amount of white wax that people used in six months in big cities in Spain.<sup>217</sup> These showy festivals lasted for several days, even weeks, such as in the case of the death of Phillip II in 1598.

Wealth was in permanent display all over the *Villa*: wealthy mine owners lived in grand houses and enjoyed all the comforts that silver could buy; the markets offered items from around the world: food, musical instruments, weaponry, luxurious clothing.<sup>218</sup> Churches housed lavish artifacts made with the silver from the mines: “The fine silver lamps in the *Iglesia Mayor* included one weighing over 200 lbs.”<sup>219</sup> The homes of the rich *Potosinos* who wanted to showcase their wealth displayed splendid works of art. Two of the most celebrated local painters of the time belonged to the “Potosí School of Painting”, the *criollo* men Melchor Pérez de

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<sup>216</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 40.

<sup>217</sup> Hanke, *Introduction*, lxxix.

<sup>218</sup> See Arzáns extensive list of items offered in the Potosí markets in *Historia*, I, 8-9.

<sup>219</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 95.

Olguín and Gaspar Miguel de Berrio.<sup>220</sup> Pérez de Olguín was responsible for creating the mentioned style that was the Andean school of artistic expression centered on Baroque religious imagery. One of Olguín's most acclaimed works is "Entry of Viceroy Morcillo", c.1716, that depicts the abovementioned visit of the Viceroy to Potosí. This particular painting is a departure from his most religious oeuvres: in it, the painter takes in the importance of the moment, when the Imperial *Villa* received the visit of a Viceroy, only for the second time in its history, in a period of almost one hundred and fifty years. This was not an easy journey, if we consider the size of the Viceroy's cortege and the crowds that gathered around the city to welcome him. Today, this painting could be seen in the Museo de America in Madrid.<sup>221</sup>

Prosperity also allowed for a rich cultural life in the *Villa* which enjoyed a theater where religious and secular plays were performed, and books arrived often from Spain.<sup>222</sup> Valentin de Acosta, a Portuguese bookseller, had a large inventory of books (over 200) of all genres: history, chivalry, classics, religion.<sup>223</sup> Potosí also counted several playwrights among its literate citizens: Gabriel del Río and Juan Galindo de Esquivel, who mostly wrote *comedias*, which were acted out in the theater and in the festivals.<sup>224</sup> Potosí's large population and abundant circulation of wealth enabled people to afford also more mundane necessities of life: the *Villa* had an ample share of markets, taverns, etc., where men and women worked. Cieza de

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<sup>220</sup> See note 113.

<sup>221</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 196.

<sup>222</sup> Hanke, *Bartolomé Arzáns*, 34.

<sup>223</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 107.

<sup>224</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 108.

León describes his impression of his visit to a Potosí market in 1549: “And I believe that no fair in the world would equal the trade of this market. And as they extracted silver every day, and these Indians are great eaters and drinkers, especially those who trade with the Spaniards, everything for sale was consumed.”<sup>225</sup>

Pleasure activities were varied in Potosí, yet all business and occupations were related one way or another to the main industry in town: mining. Any article of luxury that was bought with the proceeds of the silver trade was being brought from faraway places outside Potosí (sometimes from other continents) on llamas, alpacas, and mules handled by indigenous men. Goods from all over the world could be found in the city: silk linen from Portugal; silk embroideries and felt hats from France; tapestries and laces from Flanders; paper from Genoa; sacred paintings from Rome; crystals from Venice; ivory and precious stones from India; perfume from Arabia; rugs from Persia; spices from the Malay Peninsula; white porcelain from China.<sup>226</sup> Occupations and trades were also closely related to the mines or the people working in the mines: blacksmiths, tanners, textile workers (mostly indigenous women), the makers of *chicha* and wine served in the homes and taverns around town.<sup>227</sup> The Potosí mines were a powerful lure that laid hold of large numbers of people to work in the silver industry, which also offered job opportunities for those not working underground. Commerce in the city quickly

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<sup>225</sup> Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú, Primera Parte [1536-56]*, ed. Franklin Pease G.Y., Lima: PUCP Fondo Editorial, 1984, 293, in Lane's *Potosí*, 15.

<sup>226</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 8.

<sup>227</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 55-58.

became as remarkable as the silver bonanza. Jane Mangan states that the large population and the high concentration of labor in the mines created an urban commercial environment (in the period of such bonanza) that was entirely different from other Spanish communities, where the inhabitants of a town produced for themselves their food and clothing. This did not happen in Potosí, where the majority of the citizens bought all those articles from vendors in urban markets. As the population grew in the *Villa*, so did its markets.<sup>228</sup> Potosí's greatest commercial power rested not with exotic goods from Europe, but with its capacity to attract the staples of life.<sup>229</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Potosí was referred to as a unique and a magnificent city, dripping with silver and wealth. Today, far removed from those shining days of the Imperial City, Potosí is seen in a more unromantic way as probably the first "global" city in the world. "A barren Alpine slope in 1545, the Imperial Villa of Potosí soon joined the world's cosmopolitan cities in terms of consumer goods and sheer diversity of its inhabitants."<sup>230</sup> From the human perspective, the city was full of people from all over the world, cohabitating and sharing experiences that undoubtedly enriched their lives and the social milieu. From the perspective of the economy, trade from and to Potosí reached unprecedented levels, unparalleled to other places in the world. "Pieces of eight

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<sup>228</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 1, 23, 26.

<sup>229</sup> Brooke Larson, *Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia: Cochabamba, 1500-1900*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 90, in Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 45.

<sup>230</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 15.

[the Spanish silver coin that was worth eight *reales*] became the first true global currency, and crossed all frontiers, financing trade, war, and religious proselytization.”<sup>231</sup>

“The spread of American gold and silver across the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans opened the modern commercial era. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, silver coins and even gold coins became more readily accessible than at any prior time in history. No longer would the use of precious metal coins be limited to wealthy individuals. Now the baker could use coins to buy flour from the miller, who used them to buy wheat from the farmer, who used coins to buy bread from the baker.”<sup>232</sup>

“The greater supply of coins also facilitated international commerce and financial ties that gradually began to knit together the regional economies of the world. Merchants outside Europe would not accept the banker’s bill of exchange but they eagerly accepted the new silver coins minted in Perú and Mexico.”<sup>233</sup>

Potosí was everything those fortunate --or doomed-- to witness what today it is seen as a marvel, a one-of-a-kind city: remote, uncultivable, and inhospitable, but at the same time a place where fortunes could be made, lives could be changed, a place where good and evil mingled. The silver from the mines gave birth to this peculiar place, but it was the men of Potosí, from whatever position they occupied in life, who built this wonder. The next chapter will look over the men in Potosí and how their masculinity shaped their society.

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<sup>231</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 14.

<sup>232</sup> Jack Weatherford, *The History of Money, from Sandstone to Cyberspace*, (New York: Three River Press, 1997), 106.

<sup>233</sup> Weatherford, *The History of Money*, 107.

## CHAPTER TWO

“ ‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture.”<sup>234</sup>

### GENDER RELATIONS IN POTOSÍ

Gender roles and issues of honor replicated in the Spanish colonies in America --including Potosí-- those observed in the mother land. However, --and due to Potosí’s particular characteristics, isolation, large mixed population, enormous wealth circulating in a city where the get-rich-quick business as the main occupation-- the *Villa* was also a place where rules could be overlooked and customs could be revised. The idea of adaptation to a new environment could be a positive component in society, but as regards to citizens following the law and accepted rules of conduct, men in Potosí did not always observed them but instead created their own rules, the consequences of which invariably generated disorder and violence. The *Historia* repeatedly recounts how the *Villa* was often the scene of violent episodes: “daily brawls, wounds, cruelties and dreadful deaths happened in the *Villa*, with the fighting, quarrelling, hate, deaths, wounds afflicting everybody.”<sup>235</sup> Aggressive, violent masculinity was one of the main characteristics that male

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<sup>234</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (University of California Press, 2002), 71.

<sup>235</sup> For some examples of bloody, fights see: *Historia*, I, 113-114; 228-231. II, 56-59; 82-87; 165-169; 175-178.

*Potosinos* displayed, as it may be observed in the *Historia* and other contemporary chronicles that show that the ubiquitous presence of violence in the *Villa* was a widespread concern.

Notwithstanding the violence, men in Potosí were also displaying their religious side. They were religious, involved in the church activities through the different *cofradías* existing at the time in the *Villa*, and also in all the traditional rituals such as masses, processions, invocations, etc. Almsgiving was also considered to be part of their obligation as Christians and men of stature and good reputation. These two significant characteristics of masculinity in Potosí will be addressed separately: Violence in Chapter Three and Piety in Chapter Four. The present chapter will analyze the kind of masculinity displayed by male *Potosinos* as regards to their relationships with women and in their families, and also in the interactions in the Potosí society as a whole.

### Masculinity in Europe, 1550-1700

“MEDIEVAL EUROPE WAS A MAN’S WORLD...  
a patriarchal society.”<sup>236</sup>

Setting about defining masculinity would not be an easy task, however, the following groundwork studies will offer historical context and interpretation on issues related to gender roles and masculine performance.

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<sup>236</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1. (Capital letters are in the original text).

When gender is studied in Europe during this period, we see that it is accepted as a social construct. Masculinity, as well as femininity, were not fixed roles; in fact, they were invariably reconstructed so as to adjust to society's changing values. As a rule, traditional qualities associated with men dictated that they were supposed to be virile, strong, drawn to behave as men were presumed to behave. This created a need to perform in the specific way men behave: the appearance of masculinity was important because men needed to legitimize their manliness, which should be identified by both women and men.<sup>237</sup> In some measure this is what we notice when reading the *Historia*, the sense that men in Potosí were constructing their own masculinity. This in some ways adhered to the way it was in Spain, and in many others, it had to be retailored to their new surroundings and styles of living. One aspect of the performance of masculinity on the part of the Spaniards in Perú is that many years after the Conquest took place, Spanish men were still displaying their superiority over the native population in Perú, a superiority that was not just military because it also involved the stronger, more virile masculinity of the Europeans. However, the Spanish discourse on their military campaigns conveniently neglected to mention that they had the support of their native allies. The Conquest was over, but that virile masculinity that gave the victory to Spain was still being displayed over the feeble natives who, after being

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<sup>237</sup> Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*. (Duke University Press, 2003). Finucci analyzes how the preoccupation with gender at the time is reflected in popular culture, specifically theatrical plays, poems, travel journals, and romances.

subjugated, had become the slave labor in the mines. Arzáns reflects on this when he states that from the beginning the natives had been attacked in cold blood and now were being treated even worse when they worked in the *Cerro*.<sup>238</sup>

Judith Butler introduced the concept of gender performativity in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In it she contends that behavior is not linked with being born male or female; gender is an act, a performance, learned and displayed, in order to conform to society's ideals of what being a man or a woman meant.<sup>239</sup> In many of the *Historia* historical accounts, we see how its author meticulously introduces and describes the setting of these violent male encounters in Potosí; his narratives are crafted with the precision of a *mise-en-scène*.<sup>240</sup> It appears that he fully understood that the setting of the narrative is as important as the participants and what they do. And, what the men in Potosí were doing on such occasions was performing, displaying their masculinity as the codes of the time required. Arzáns carefully described where they would engage in the fights, usually in the narrow streets or the squares of the city or in open fields in its outskirts. On some occasions, the men wore lavish costumes, in others, they were clothed only with pants, bare-chested. Their props, an assortment of handheld weapons. At the time, neither Arzáns himself nor the men engaging in brawling had

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<sup>238</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 139.

<sup>239</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York, Routledge, 1990).

<sup>240</sup> Hanke says that when Arzáns writes about fights and festivities he does it with so much detail that it is almost as he would have been present at all of those events. *Historia*, I, Lxxviii.

heard of the term “performing masculinity”; they all thought they were acting or reacting in the manner of virile men.<sup>241</sup>

Gender is socially constructed, and as such there are different interpretations of masculinity, since masculinity was fashioned in historical distinct frameworks. Therefore, masculinity is not a generic term since it could be constructed and changed, and there is a recognition of a plurality of fluid masculinities. Regarding the performative nature of gender, Dawn Hadley states that her book “demonstrate that performance and the public affirmation of identity were central to the construction of masculinities.” She adds that gestures, appearance, and clothes were important in the performance of gender roles and had symbolic meanings,<sup>242</sup> and that there was a “notion that gendered identity was something which was learned through process of socialization and shaped through social interactions and social expectations.”<sup>243</sup> Military men held dominant forms of masculinity, and military accomplishments and mastery were attributes associated with masculine identity.<sup>244</sup> At any time, Potosí was teeming with men who were or had been active soldiers in the Spanish army. In either case, those military men had a lot of time on their hands, and used to being active in their line of work --warfare-- they were not always able to peacefully wait for their next military engagement.

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<sup>241</sup> For some historical accounts about performance of masculinity in Potosí, brawls, etc. in the *Historia* see: I, 10, 263, 374; II, 232, 436, 439; III, 258

<sup>242</sup> Dawn M. Hadley (Ed.), *Masculinity in medieval Europe*. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 14, 15.

<sup>243</sup> Hadley, *Masculinity*, 8.

<sup>244</sup> Hadley, *Masculinity*, 11.

This kind of situation placed large numbers of idle men with belligerent instincts, not in organized military wars, but rather in street skirmishes in Potosí.<sup>245</sup>

In the later Middle Ages, a boy would achieve adult masculinity mainly by measuring up to other men. This had different characteristics according to different sectors of society. Knights, for instance, performed their masculinity through the process of competing with other men and it was measured in terms of dominance and control of women and other men, and carried out through physical aggression and the use of violence, mainly in armed encounters.<sup>246</sup> In this period, there was not 'one' but a plurality of masculinities. Also, masculinity was a well-defined concept: men claiming to be 'masculine' had to be audacious, fearless, physically strong, and possess honor. In essence, men were supposed to be the opposite of women because females had negative traits: they were "evil, weak, lustful, foolish, untrustworthy," and so forth.<sup>247</sup>

Two of the essays in *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*<sup>248</sup> are certainly pertinent to the topic of this dissertation since they deal with different issues of masculinity and Spanish men in the colonies. In one of the essays historian Allyson Poska states that the political and economic conditions in villages of Galicia --

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<sup>245</sup> For Arzáns' historical accounts about soldiers in Potosí see: *Historia*, I, 44, 74, 77, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 101, 104, 105, 113, 135, 137, 180, 182, 186, 197, 198, 199, 206, 207, 211, 214, 215, 229, 232, 233, 262, 291, 298, 317, 324, 332, 354, 360, 400, 401.

<sup>246</sup> Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 11.

<sup>247</sup> Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 1-3.

<sup>248</sup> Scott H. Hendrix & Susan C. Karant-Nunn (Eds.), *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008).

northwestern Spain-- affected how men and women behaved. Women were strong-willed and interfered in all matters of the lives of their husbands or sons-in-law. In order to gain their independence and claim their masculinity, these Galician men opted for migrating, by the thousands, to the newly founded colonies in America. They were not just looking for improving their status and making a better living, but they also wanted to get away from the domination of their wives and mothers-in-law.<sup>249</sup> Early Modern Spanish men were expected to display honor and masculine, virile behavior, not to act like women nor be dominated by them; being effeminate was a serious flaw and insult if somebody use the term to define them. In defense of their honor and reputation, Spanish men were not concerned with using physical violence when necessary. Undoubtedly, the rich mines of Potosí must have been a strong lure for Galician men. There are multiple mentions of *Gallegos* (men from Galicia) in the *Historia*. Although we do not have the exact number of *Gallegos* in Potosí, there are many references to them, especially in the coverage of the *Vicuña* Wars that involved people of all regions in Spain.<sup>250</sup> It is not difficult to surmise that some men who came to Potosí escaping --like the men from Galicia-- situations where they perceived that their masculinity was under attack and, once they had put distance between them and the problem, they could have turned into a more

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<sup>249</sup> Allyson M. Poska. "A Married Man is a Woman: Negotiating Masculinity in Early Modern Northwest Spain," in Scott H. Hendrix and Susan C. Karant-Nunn, eds., *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008), 3-20.

<sup>250</sup> References to *Gallegos* in the *Historia*, I, 204, 324, 329, 333, 344, 345, 346, 347, 383, 385; II, 246, 255, 356, 393, 395, 459, 470; III, 21, 63, 77, 101, 132, 152.

violent image of themselves by creating a new way of displaying their masculinity: becoming more aggressive.

In the other essay, historian Ulrike Strasser points out that St. Ignatius of Loyola conceived a different kind of masculinity for the members of his order, the Jesuits, and its followers. He called it a “clerical masculinity.” Jesuit priests could not perform masculinity like secular men since marriage or fatherhood was not available to them. Instead, Jesuits should display spiritual fortitude and engage in spiritual, not carnal relationships, more like father-son.<sup>251</sup> This idea of a ‘clerical masculinity’ surely must have circulated among the many priests of the Society of Jesus order in Potosí since they had an important presence in the religious scene in the *Villa*; the Jesuits had a school, a church, and a cemetery in the *Villa*, and the order was very vocal in the defense of the native population and the rejection of the *Mita* system. In a very detailed historical account, Arzáns describes the June 1624 festivity that took place in Potosí to celebrate the canonization of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order. A truce was declared in the middle of the *Vicuña Wars* just to honor this important figure in the Catholic Church.<sup>252</sup>

Religious zeal was another characteristic of Modern European masculinity. Centuries before, the crusaders embodied the idea of a military approach to the defense of the Christian faith and the recovering of the Holy Land from the hands of

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<sup>251</sup> Ulrike Strasser. “The First Form and Grace,” in Hendrix and Karant-Nunn *Masculinities*, 45-70.

<sup>252</sup> There are over one hundred mentions related to the Jesuits in the three volumes of the *Historia*.

the infidels. A real army was sent to the New World this time not to recover but to take over new territories in the name of the Spanish crown. It was a different enterprise but still one full of Christian fervor awakened by the promise of large new numbers of converts entering the Church. These new followers represented another rich lode that the Spaniards could mine not with tools like the military weapons and strategy but with the power of persuasion --and coercion-- of the men of the Church.

Catholic priests represented another form of masculinity: they were strong willed and pious and displayed as much courage as the soldiers; heresy was their opponent, and they were ready to defeat it. Priests are often described as “good men” in the *Historia*; they are portrayed as dedicated to their profession, and they cared about the *Villa* and the population in most cases. In 1604, during a hard-fought combat between rival factions, a group of priests intervened, putting themselves in the line of fire, to stop the fight.<sup>253</sup> They showed courage and determination, behaving with masculine physical and mental strength. This particular event in the streets of the *Villa* was so serious that the *Corregidor* reported about it in a letter sent to the *Audiencia* in La Plata.<sup>254</sup> However, in other accounts in the *Historia*, we learn that some priests did not respect their vows and

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<sup>253</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 256-257; II, 252; II, 277.

<sup>254</sup> Carta del *Corregidor* Don Pedro de Lodeña a la Audiencia de la Plata, 1604.IV.29. (Audiencia de La Plata: Cartas y Relaciones, No. 905). This letter could be read in *Historia*, I, 258.

engaged in romantic affairs with women,<sup>255</sup> or frequented gambling houses.<sup>256</sup>

Although Arzáns was a devote Catholic, he nevertheless was able to include in the *Historia* his criticism of the clergy regarding issues of greed, lust, and mistreatment of the natives.<sup>257</sup>

Early Modern Europe exhibited multiple patterns of masculinity, and men did not all practice the same kind of masculinity; masculinity was fluid, changeable, and socially constructed, therefore not easy to define. Although masculine roles were adjusted to conform to the context of particular societal norms, certain characteristics were considered intrinsic to male behavior: virility, strength, and Christian piety. As important as it was to have those qualities, it was equally necessary to exhibit them in public, mostly in front of other men. This performance of masculinity was essential to keep the status an individual enjoyed in the community of other men. Potosí noticeably mirrored this concept of multiple masculinities; the particular social context and location of the city nurtured the need for the construction of a masculinity that in many ways would turn out to be different than the traditional one. In the different Viceroyalties in Spanish America, large coastal cities --Veracruz, Lima, Buenos Aires-- were easily accessible for the

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<sup>255</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 73-75.

<sup>256</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 184.

<sup>257</sup> For overall critique of clergy in in the *Historia*, see *Introduction to the Historia*, I, clii-cliv.

For accounts about priests see: I, 9, 95, 97, 116, 187, 206, 250, 256, 330, 336, 339, 343, 376; II, 64, 71-75, 100, 109, 113, 184, 192, 224, 244, 252, 275, 277, 290, 334, 347, 416, 460, 474, 476-479, 485-486, 491-492, 498-499; III, 45, 87-89, 93, 131-132, 135-138, 153, 156, 160, 165, 168, 170, 177, 209, 212, 218-219, 243, 247, 256-259, 271, 287, 301, 304, 306, 313, 334, 353, 359, 369, 385, 388, 398.

continuous comings and goings of government officials who supervised the affairs of the colonial communities. In American soil, Spaniards managed to establish towns in which they expected to copy the institutions and way of life they knew in Europe. This was different in Potosí because it was not on the coast but at high altitude in the Andes, and the isolation gave the *Potosinos* a sense of “devil may care” attitude; they could play by their own rules, with almost no consequences or price to pay.

### Crisis of Masculinity in Spain at the Beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

“The love for extravagant clothes is more tolerable in women, in men, an abominable vice. Nowadays, men prefer clothes that not even frivolous women would wear. It would be difficult to find today a man wearing the same kind of color or fabric that his father or grandfather would have chosen.”<sup>258</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish scholars, and crown and church officials, deemed that masculinity in the Spanish Empire was undergoing a state of crisis during the early portion of the seventeenth century. There were three main reasons for such a crisis. The first one was military defeats that diminished Spain’s standings in the world and were depleting the royal funds that would in turn undermine the domestic economy, despite the huge amounts of gold and silver that Spain was receiving from their American colonies. The wealth that American resources created was filling the crown coffers, but at the same time that wealth created an overspending in foreign goods, thus generating a trade imbalance. Secondly, population in Spain was in decline because the kingdom was involved in several

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<sup>258</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 236.

wars and also because of the high migration to America. Thirdly, several bouts of epidemic diseases such as the bubonic plague erupted between 1596 and 1602.<sup>259</sup> Looking at the causes that arguably were considered to be the reason for this crisis, a strong connection to Potosí could be made because the resources coming from the New World at the time were mostly related to the Potosí silver, and also because Potosí was receiving a large share of the immigration.

This commentary on masculinity's decline was directed to men in general in Spain at the time, and it seemed to have been centered on the noble, higher classes, because due to their different occupations, they were active in more areas of society: military, landowners, and courtiers. Lower classes, on the other hand, were engaged in more restricted and fixed activities: the peasants working in the fields, the artisans working in their shops, etc.<sup>260</sup>

This crisis was believed to have affected Spain's males in several areas: they became effeminate, did not join the military, abandoned religion, and developed a disregard from what until then had constituted honorable occupations for men, working the land, for instance, when speaking of the peasants. As regards to the aristocracy, they were the ones mostly concerned with their appearance --clothes, hairstyles, etc.-- instead of engaging in noble pursuits such as the military and religious devotions. In 1635, in Baena, Spain, Dominican Priest Francisco de León dramatically inquired during a sermon: "Where are the men in Spain? What I see are

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<sup>259</sup> Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, "Ideal Men: Masculinity and Decline in Seventeenth-Century Spain." *Renaissance Quarterly*, 61, No. 2 (Summer 2008), 465.

<sup>260</sup> Leffeldt, "Ideal Men", 466.

effeminate men... I see men converted into women.”<sup>261</sup> Arzáns joined in the criticism of effeminate men: in one of his historical accounts, he describes them as being worthy to receive the harshest condemnation. He also denounced the Spaniards for being arrogant and not inclined to work; he refers to them as “vanagloriosos” (boastful).<sup>262</sup>

Since large fortunes were made in the silver business, *Potosinos* were allowed to live lavishly and wear expensive jewelry and elaborate clothing, even men engaging in combat. The battle of Huayna in 1622, one of the earliest clashes in the *Vicuña Wars*, is thoroughly described in the *Historia*, depicting how some of the group leaders were wearing helmets adorned with pearls and multi-colored feathers and boots also covered with pearls. Much attention was put into the attire those men decided to wear for this battle, because such finery was an indication of how wealthy and powerful they were. This should not be seen as a sign of men becoming more hedonistic and less masculine in Potosí, since the description of the combat also shows the violence with which it was fought; those men displayed the characteristics of manliness: virility, strength, ferocity.<sup>263</sup> Also, it is important to remember that for all purposes Potosí was a “company town”, since mining was the only business. Although it is true that the mines were privately owned by different people, the main beneficiary --who was dictating the rules, and in a way, acting as the “company”-- was the Spanish Crown. Even if that was their desire when

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<sup>261</sup> Leffeldt's, “*Ideal Men*,” 463.

<sup>262</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 62; *Introduction*, lxxx.

<sup>263</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 336-340.

deciding to go to the colonies in America, Spanish men would have not been able to engage in the profession that those critics of the decline in the country's masculinity supported as desirable for manly Spaniards, since farming, cattle raising, etc. was not feasible in Potosí. Manliness then had to be displayed in a different field, urban, crowded, full of men not intending on setting permanent roots; their intention was to get rich as quick as possible, and while they were fighting to achieve their goals -- literally and figuratively-- they were also gratifying themselves with all the lavish indulgences the *Villa* offered, such as clothes, jewelry, etc. However, male Potosinos would have never been under suspicion of becoming effeminate, since their violent behavior would have spoken louder than their choices of attire.

Criticism of masculinity was happening in other places in Modern Europe, not solely in Spain; but the debate in Spain about the deficiencies in the manhood of their own men was unique because it was tied to the decline the kingdom was experiencing.<sup>264</sup> The solution: farmers should work on the field, artisans in their shops, nobles join the military and display again their manly attributes as they had done in the past during the Crusades or the Reconquista. And it is this particular issue that stood at the center of the decline of masculinity: men were not fulfilling their military duties as men should do, with gallantry and courage. Spaniards seemed to have been looking with nostalgia to a past that had showered their empire with glory and fortune. The present did not look promising, so their escape of dire situations was to go back to the past for reassurance and remembrance. This

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<sup>264</sup> Lehfeltdt, "Ideal Men", 466.

is very similar to the attitude of Arzáns, who began writing the praises of his beloved Potosí when the *Villa* was just a shadow of its past splendor.

These critics of masculinity feared that the same way that happened to classical civilizations of the past --the Romans, the Persians-- the strength of the Spanish Empire would be compromised by its men, who were becoming decadent, effete.<sup>265</sup> Without mentioning it, those who complain about a crisis in Spanish masculinities seem to indirectly support violence. For men to behave like in the past, when valiant soldiers behaved as such, they needed to display manly attitudes at winning battles, but battles were not won without violence. Violent behavior, albeit with gallantry, was a characteristic of military men. And for men it must have been difficult to change and become a completely different kind of individuals, leaving behind the violent mode that made them successful soldiers and brought honor and prosperity to their king and country. The idea of idle soldiers not employing the traits --violence, for instance-- that had gained them victories in the past must have been out of character for them, as it is described by Fray Diego de Ocaña of male Potosinos: “Many soldiers, jobless, roam aimlessly around. They earn a living gambling or are supported by rich black women or Indian women. Since they are fed and clothed, they spend their days roving on the cobbled square, where only the very brave dare to set foot.”<sup>266</sup> This position seemed to imply a tolerated view of a

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<sup>265</sup> Lehfeltdt, “Ideal Men”, 468-69.

<sup>266</sup> Fray Diego de Ocaña, *Viaje*, 268.

For more on men behaving aggressively in Potosí and the *Villa*'s depicted as a unsavory place see: Juan López de Cepeda's (*Oidor* of the Audiencia de Charcas) description of Potosí as “spelunca latronum” (cave of bandits) and “un pueblo

certain violent behavior if the models of masculinity were based on military actions. Spanish men needed to show their bravery and strength, so a certain amount of violence was to be accepted. A mixed message, for sure. Another issue mentioned in the writings about masculinity in the period is the condemnation of idleness and the dangers this behavior imposed on the proper display of manhood.<sup>267</sup> “Idleness was certainly the antithesis of the productive behavior that many critics believed was necessary to halt Spain’s decline.”<sup>268</sup>

Although Potosí was isolated, the issues of the crisis of masculinity in Spain had reached the *Villa*. However, and because, as it is mentioned above, Potosí was in most ways very different from other urban centers in Spanish Colonial America, the concern about men becoming more like women by wearing fancy clothes and jewelry did not create anxiety; in fact, it was openly accepted and celebrated because it was a display of how rich and powerful those men had become by the silver mines. Potosí men must have been fancier dressers but were not shy of displaying extreme violent behavior. Idle men were roaming the streets of the *Villa*, but as much as that was criticized as unacceptable, there were no other ways of earning a living or settling down and raising a family unless they were merchants or involved in the mining business. Not a justification for idleness, but a simple fact. In an odd way, Potosí became a clear example of the complaints about masculinity, by

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babilónico” (a Babylonian place) in *Audiencia de Charcas, Correspondencia de Presidentes y Oidores, Documentos del Archivo de Indias, Tomo II, 1580-1589*, Madrid, Imprenta de Juan Pueyo, 1922.

<sup>267</sup> Leffeldt, “Ideal Men”, 467.

<sup>268</sup> Leffeldt, “Ideal Men”, 480.

displaying in an extreme way the traits that were signaled as causing the crisis, albeit in a unique way.

### A Tale of Two Saints

The Catholic Church in Spain, being among the critics of masculine decline, decided to use the image of two of its most popular saints, San Isidro (*El Labrador*, the farmer) and San José (the Virgin Mary's husband) to create a narrative around them, and motivate men to abandon their self-indulgent, unproductive, impious behavior. In an effort to combat these concerns, and also to present proper examples of men exhibiting acceptable masculine comportment, the Church deployed the cult of these saints, using them and the circumstances of their lives, professions, and families, as spiritual weapons. One of the criticisms for men in the lower classes was the idea that farmers and artisans were not doing what they were supposed to do: tending to the fields or working in creative endeavors in their shops. A revamping of the already popular cult of these two saints was the Catholic Church remedy to solve, in part, the masculinity crisis centered in the issues of idleness and unproductive lives. The purpose was to lead men to behave as good husbands and fathers, conducting their lives with virtue and moderation.

There is no indication that the *Potosinos* particularly venerated these two saints; however, the main issues behind their lives being used by the Catholic Church as symbols of exemplary men who were productive in society and devoted to their families served as a counterpart of how male *Potosinos* behaved: idleness, vagrancy, single men roaming the streets in search of pleasure or involved in

endless feuds. They came to be a fast crowd, with no ties to the community, only planning for the near future, only seizing the present day. The lives of these two saints only underscore more the peculiarities of Potosí.

San Isidro, born in Madrid in 1082 during the *Reconquista* of the Spanish homeland from the invading Moors, a period that was looked at with admiration because of the military victories that made it possible. This feeling of pride was absent in the seventeenth century, when the men in Spain did not appear to be up to par with those who valiantly fought to expel the invaders. San Isidro was the patron saint of farmers and peasants and of the city of Madrid; during his lifetime he was known for working hard in the fields and taking care of his family, and also for making his faith the center of his existence, always placing his devotion first and above everything else; he was supposed to have performed many miracles. His life story became an excellent instrument to be used to support the motif of a perfect Christian male, one who is a simple, humble laborer, a symbol of the dignity of work as opposed to idleness. He was so far removed from the medieval archetypes of “distant, noble, heroic, usually members of the clergy or aristocracy” that had usually been used as examples of Christian virtue.<sup>269</sup> In 1599 Lope de Vega wrote a lengthy poem dedicated to San Isidro in celebration of his praiseworthy life.<sup>270</sup> The

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<sup>269</sup> Matilde Fernández Montes, “Isidro, el varón de Dios como modelo de sincretismo religioso en la Edad Media.” *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares*, 1999-06-01, Vol. 54(1), 19.

<sup>270</sup> Lope de Vega, *Isidro: Poema castellano de Lope de Vega Carpio, en que se escribe la vida del bienaventurado Isidro, Labrador de Madrid y su Patrón divino*. Barcelona, en casa de Honofre Anglada, A costa de Iusepe Andrés Librero, 1608. Available online at the UNR library.

resurgence of the cult of San Isidro is a clear example of the work of the Catholic Church to “define ideals” and models that could help to strengthen the presence of the institution in Spain and in the New World and to make a stand against the crisis of masculinity.

San José was one of the major saints of the Catholic faith, undoubtedly because he was a member of the Holy Family, Mary’s husband, and the earthly father of Jesus. He was primarily known as the patron of fathers, families, and craftsmen, mainly carpenters. Until the seventeenth century, his image in artistic representations was that of a feeble old man, married to a much younger woman, raising a son who was not his. All this created several implications in the narrative of his and Mary’s marriage: infidelity and, due to his old age, the incapability of a sexual union and providing for his family. Much the same as it happened with the cult of San Isidro, the Catholic Church came to the decision that the devotion to San José had to be revitalized in order to make his cult more useful in two grounds.

First, following the re-modeling of San Isidro to elevate the standing of farm workers as symbols of ideal virile men, the narrative and portrayal of San José needed to be updated to elevate the stature of husbands and fathers as the ideal men in society. Up to then, pictorial representations of San José showed the saint as an old man, much older than Mary; this was then modified to depict a virile, younger man --late thirties, maybe forties-- which would not put into doubt his sexual competence. Also, there was the addition of San José shown frequently working in his carpenter shop, many times with the aid of a young Jesus. The idea was to ensure

his capacity to be a good provider for his family. The new imagery then would rejuvenate San José, converting him in a symbol of the ideal male: not old but young, not weak but strong, not idle but productive.<sup>271</sup>

Second, in the Spanish colonies in America, the Church sought to use this new depiction of San José for a different purpose: their objective was to make the conquered natives' conceptions of marriage and sexuality to fit the morals of Spanish society. Couples should not live together without being married and sexuality should be controlled, especially among women. For this purpose, the imagery of San José and Mary's betrothal became prominent in the seventeenth century, depicting a younger, more vigorous San José.<sup>272</sup> In Spanish America it became a change not in masculinity but in the discourse on marriage and gender roles.<sup>273</sup> This would also help with the Spanish project of colonialism by expanding control over lives of the recently Christianized indigenous population. San José needed a makeover but not so drastic so as to model another of the factors behind the crisis of masculinity: men paying too much attention to their personal grooming

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<sup>271</sup> Lehfeltdt, "Ideal Men", 474.

<sup>272</sup> Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage in the Spanish Empire: Depictions of Holy Matrimony and Gender Discourses in the Seventeenth Century." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Autumn, 2001, Vol. 32, No. 3, 645.

For images of the betrothal see works of famous painters such as El Greco, Murillo, Zurbarán. For more on the subject of the cult of St. Joseph, see Villaseñor Black *Creating the cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire*, (Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>273</sup> Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage", 637.

and attire. He had to be presented as a serious man with no affectations, displaying modesty and gravity.<sup>274</sup>

The crisis of masculinity was not the only preoccupation for the Spanish Catholic Church in the seventeenth century; they were also concerned with the marriage institution and the control of women's sexuality. That's why both in Europe and in the New World the Spanish Empire deemed it essential to implement these changes in the presentation of San José and Mary as the ideal couple, united in sanctioned matrimony.<sup>275</sup>

A man in control of his wife and the rest of the family was considered to be manly; not being able to have such command over his household would erode the essence of his masculinity.<sup>276</sup> In the Spanish colonies in America, this new emphasis in the cult of San José intended also to strengthen the patriarchal and authoritarian system implemented over the native population who needed to be converted and forced to live according to the Catholic faith norms of social conduct. Among the native population, marriage, monogamy, and fidelity was to be ordained and repudiation of spouses (divorce), eradicated.<sup>277</sup>

### The Concept of Honor in Spanish America and Potosí<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage", 650.

<sup>275</sup> Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage", 653-54.

<sup>276</sup> Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage", 659.

<sup>277</sup> Villaseñor Black, "Love and Marriage", 659.

<sup>278</sup> For gender roles, patriarchy, and honor, see Susan Migden Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857* (Stanford University Press, 1992). On

“One way of defining honor is a susceptibility for having a certain set of dispositions and the likelihood that certain emotive states will be evoked in certain settings. Honor is above all the keen sensitivity to the experience of humiliation and shame, a sensitivity manifested by the desire to be envied by others and the propensity to envy the success of others. The honorable person is one whose self-esteem and social standing is intimately dependent on the esteem or the envy he or she elicits in others.”<sup>279</sup>

The concept of honor was originated in Europe during the Middle Ages. In Spain, society adopted a set of social codes in which honor stood out. Honor was the fundamental principle around which society was organized and regimented; it was central to men and women’s lives and dictated how people were to be regarded: those who had honor and those who did not have it. Honor, together with patriarchy, race, and class, all shaped gender ideas in Spanish America. Traditionally, men in Spanish culture had complete power in all areas of society. Issues of race became more complex in Spanish Colonial America due to the inclusion of two other groups who were widely present in the colonies: the indigenous and African populations, as well as the subsequent subgroups created by miscegenation: mulattos, mestizos, zambos, etc. Social ranks also created series of expectations for both men and women. The new social environments in Spanish America were also a factor that contributed to the construction of new, or modified,

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the lives of European and Criollo women in Perú, Luis Martin, *Daughters of the Conquistadores: Women of the Viceroyalty of Perú* (University of New Mexico Press, 1983). For a study on women’s history, race, and class, in early colonial Spanish America, Karen Vieira Powers *Women in the Crucible of Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500-1600* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

<sup>279</sup> Miller, *Humiliation*, 84.

expectations for both male and female gender roles. However, in Spanish Colonial America men continued to be portrayed in general with favorable characteristics: intelligence, fortitude of mind and body; women were regarded as the opposite: foolish and weak, therefore in need of control by the men in her family. Arzáns describes the perfect man, using as an example the Potosí miner Georgio Zapata, as a person possessing many high “*excelencias*” (qualities) and moral virtues, a person whose endeavors, bravery, discipline, and skills in battle proved to be advantageous. This ideal man was tall, had a strong, very handsome, and well-proportioned body. He was serious in appearance but also gentle, kind, tolerant, very gracious, good-humored, generous, showing his generosity when giving alms to those in need.<sup>280</sup>

In these men and women’s depictions we notice the obvious recognition of men’s remarkable attributes, which undoubtedly would confer them honor and respect. Women, on the other hand, are mostly characterized with not very pleasant attributes other than their physical beauty. As a gendered concept, honor mostly meant for a woman that she had to be chaste; for a man, it was a more complicated double issue. It involved his personal reputation in front of the community and other men; and a great part of his reputation was tied to the reputation of the women in his household, something that he was in charge of keeping under control.

A man could gain honor defeating others in battles; losing his honor or being dishonored meant to be emasculated.<sup>281</sup> During the Spanish Golden Age the concept

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<sup>280</sup> Arzáns, *Historia, I*, 118.

<sup>281</sup> Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 60-61.

of honor continued to be prominent in culture. The code of honor originated in the values of the knights of medieval elite, which subsequently were adopted by the rest of society, becoming a cardinal rule of Spanish culture. Everybody adhered to such code and used it to regulate their behavior. The concern about honor was far greater in Spain than in other countries in Europe.<sup>282</sup> “If there was one passion capable of defining the conduct of the Spanish people, it was the passion of honor.”<sup>283</sup> When gathered to socialize, men did it predominantly in public spaces like plazas, fields, streets; many times confrontations occurred because those spaces were conducive to displays of competition and physical aggression between disparaging individuals trying to solve their differences and bystanders who would incite them to perform the established rules of masculinity, encouraging them to act violently. Many times, a joke, taunt, or simply the wrong word at the wrong time would be considered an insult. Also not taking one’s hat off, touching a man’s body or his clothes, or not clearing the way for others would be seen as an offense that justified engaging in a brawl; idleness also bred violence.<sup>284</sup> “At root, honor means ‘don’t tread on me’. But to show someone you were not to be trod upon meant that you had to hold yourself out as one who was willing to tread on others. The style of honor did not mean you were reluctant to give offense because you knew the other

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<sup>282</sup> Scott K. Taylor, *Honor and Violence in Golden Age Spain*, (Yale University Press, 2008), 161.

<sup>283</sup> Bartolomé Bennassar, *The Spanish Character: Attitudes and Mentalities from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, Benjamin Keen (Trans.), (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979), 213.

<sup>284</sup> Taylor, *Honor and Violence*, 141, 144, 145.

would retaliate. It meant that you had to look not at all fearful about giving offense.”<sup>285</sup>

Even in an unorthodox place like Potosí, the code of honor was very important. Many of the historical accounts that take place in the *Villa*'s crooked streets and open markets and fields, depicting crude violence, were originated in acts considered disrespectful, disdainful, or insulting. In one of those accounts that took place in 1553,<sup>286</sup> a bloody battle took place between two men in Potosí: Pedro Núñez and Baltasar Pérez; they were both *hijosdalgo*<sup>287</sup> and well known in the *Villa*. The reason for this fight is simply described as “*ciertos puntos de satisfacción de honra*” (a certain offense regarding honor). The two men, naked from the waist up, met in a field in the outskirts of the *Villa* and began fighting savagely, so much so that some men who accompanied Núñez and Pérez also become involved, fighting among themselves. Pérez died in the field, and Núñez, gravely wounded, remained a cripple for the rest of his life. Garcilaso de la Vega also writes about this battle in his *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*.<sup>288</sup>

Honor was an essential component of Spanish hierarchical colonial society, a society with deep differentiations between Spaniards and the native and mixed-race peoples of the Americas, and it would remain this way for years to come.

“... on the eve of the wars of independence, the centuries' old distinction between Spanish honor and dishonor of infamy associated with persons of mixed racial background persisted. Although the concern with blood purity was less than in the sixteenth and seventeenth

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<sup>285</sup> Miller, *Humiliation*, 84, 85.

<sup>286</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 77-78.

<sup>287</sup> The term indicates that they belonged to the minor nobility by bloodline.

<sup>288</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, Tomo XI, (Madrid, Imprenta Villalpando, 1800), 312.

centuries, legitimacy continued to form a major social boundary for nearly everyone born outside the elite. Honor in its many manifestations, in short, remained in good health as the colonial era drew to a close and would profoundly influence the social structure of the newly independent countries".<sup>289</sup>

Several of the *Historia* historical accounts were centered on themes of honor, where either men or women took revenge in their own hands to defend it.<sup>290</sup> One of the accounts in the *Historia* that better illustrates the effect of the obsession with honor is the story of Don Juan de Toledo. He was a Potosí man who for twenty years walked around the town, wearing a sack and carrying a skull in his hand. After he died, a note written by him was found inside the skull. In the note, Toledo explained that he was not the man everybody thought he was, a religious person pondering death. In fact, the note said, the skull belonged to a man --Don Martín de Salazar-- he had killed because the man had offended his honor. Not happy with just the killing, Toledo went to the cemetery, unburied the corpse, open the man's chest, pulled out the heart, and ate it. During the past twenty years, Toledo had reflected on what he had done, and, although he was sorry for the murder, he knew that if the man who offended his honor would come back to life a thousand times, he would kill him again a thousand times. The passing of time had not put out the fire of his rancor.<sup>291</sup>

### Women

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<sup>289</sup> Mark A. Burkholder, "Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America", in Johnson & Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, 42.

<sup>290</sup> A large number of historical accounts fall in this category. For some examples see: *Historia*, I, 67; I, 235; II, 170.

<sup>291</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 402.

As regards to women's lives in the Spanish colonies in America, they continued to be affected by honor since the rules that governed their existence in Spain were, for the most part, maintained in America, and they continued to be subjected to the will of their fathers first and their husbands later. Marriages were usually dictated for them by their families, and since familial lineage was closely tied to that of the mother, the honor, and reputation of a family was tied to the woman's purity and virginity. The concept of honor was not restricted to people of the elite class. It was also a factor in the lives of people of lower status in society who could also lay claim to their honor. Be that as it may, it was the upper-class individual who would judge what was honorable or not.<sup>292</sup>

Honor and shame were fundamental concepts to Peninsular societies and remained the same after they were transferred to the Spanish colonies where they also mixed with other sets of practices and beliefs from indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans. For men, honor meant social status and righteous behavior; an important part of manliness was to control the sexuality of the women under their authority: wives, daughters, etc. For women, who were regarded as incapable of restraining their sexuality, the danger was that their loss of honor would not just damage their personal reputation but the reputation of family too. Honor became then a tool of domination to keep women from dishonoring themselves and their families. For women honor determined their proper sexual conduct and also their submission to the males in their families. The code of honor dominated all aspects of

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<sup>292</sup> Johnson & Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor*, 10.

colonial society as well as relations between men and women in all social statuses since the concept of honor was valued among the elite and non-elite groups. As important as it was to maintain honor personally and for the family, it was equally imperative to display it, to make sure that the rest of the community knew one possessed it. The culture of honor in Colonial Latin America was an essential factor in the organization of society: when honor was assaulted, challenged, not only the individual position in society was in jeopardy, but the whole society was also at stake.<sup>293</sup>

The *Historia* offers a mixed opinion of women: they are very beautiful and brave, but also dangerous, capable of evil deeds. In Arzáns' opinion, a woman is a beautiful animal who brings companionship in sorrow and consolation in danger; but nobody can deny there are good and bad women.<sup>294</sup> Certainly, women fascinated Arzáns; they are at the center of a large number of his historical accounts; some women are dishonest, others decent. Nevertheless, he finds women attractive, sensual, and dangerous. The latter because their sexuality leads them to

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<sup>293</sup> For the analysis of concepts of gender, gender formation, and the correlation with the understanding of history see: Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"; for a study on contextualized masculinity in Colonial Mexico: Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Origins of Macho: Men and Masculinity in Colonial Mexico*; for a focus, not just on men and masculinities, but also on gender relations, identities, and inequalities: Matthew C. Gutmann, *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*; for the construction of gender relations in Early Colonial America: Karen Vieira Powers: *Women in the Crucible of Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500-1600*; for a collection of primary sources on individual women's experiences in the Colonial period: Nora E. Jaffary and Jane E. Mangan: *Women in Colonial Latin America, 1526-1806: Texts and Contexts*, and *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas*.

<sup>294</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 449.

love affairs, sinful sometimes.<sup>295</sup> In general, the portrayal of women in the *Historia* does not agree with the traditional image of a colonial woman who is withdrawn and introspective. Of course, that traditional colonial woman existed in Potosí, however, in the same manner that male *Potosinos* were performing a different kind of masculinity, it could be said that women were also behaving differently. Some accounts in the *Historia* describe those women who took arms to defend their honor or their beloved ones' lives, or dressed as men looking for adventure in the streets of the *Villa*.<sup>296</sup>

#### Performing Masculinity in Potosí

Being a new field of study, it is not surprising the term 'masculinity' does not appear regularly in the *Historia*. When describing what today we consider concepts of masculinity, manliness, etc. Arzáns often uses expressions such as '*hombria*', '*hombre de bien*', or qualifiers: '*hombre honrado, hombre honesto, hombre valiente*,' etc. Hanke and Mendoza, the editors of the only complete *Historia* that has been published so far, also use similar words to refer to the concept of masculinity and masculine behavior in the one hundred and eighty pages they wrote as introduction to the publication. This is to be expected too since this work was published in 1965, well before masculinity became a category of scholarly analysis.

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<sup>295</sup> For some accounts on lust in the *Historia* see: I, 113, 215, 227, 294; II, 172, 432; III, 166, 189.

<sup>296</sup> *Historia, Introduction*, clxv. For examples of women taking arms see: *Historia*, II, 62, 63, 84. For cross-dressing women see: *Historia*, II, 56, 149.

The first large contingent of Spanish men arriving in America were the *Conquistadores*, who could be considered the archetype of masculine behavior in the Early Modern world. Conquistadores were fierce individuals, most of whom did not come from professional armies and were not trained in the traditional rules of engagement. They took on the adventurous journey to the newly discovered lands in America only to get their hands on the treasures these territories offered, mostly precious metals. The men who risked their lives making the long and dangerous expedition to America in search of riches, professional soldiers or not, were adamant in succeeding at all costs. This journey to the New World, in many cases, was not an easy feat, and it took a very special kind of man to endure the dangers of the new American environments and the encounter with indigenous people who were ready to fight to their death defending their homeland. Also, the Spaniards had to endure the internal battles among them that sometimes rose to the level of civil wars, such the one between Pizarro and Almagro, amply covered by Arzáns in his *Historia*.<sup>297</sup> To use the word adventurous to describe some of them almost colors their mission with a romantic luster. To survive diseases, hunger, and constant attacks from hostile native tribes, these men had to be merciless, strong, courageous; basically, they had to display their masculinity that at the time, in Europe, where they came from, was supposed to require them to display virility and strength and use their physical power rather than walking away from violence.

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<sup>297</sup> For coverage of the conquest of Perú, including the civil wars among Perú conquistadores, see *Historia*, I, 3-62.

Some must have fancied themselves as the characters of the popular chivalry books of the period. Even more, they sometimes compared their achievements to those of past civilizations that ruled the world or the literature of the time as stated by Restall and Fernandez-Armesto “Most conquistador writers shared a background as readers of the sixteenth-century equivalent of airport-bookstall fiction: romances of chivalry in which a hero, destined for greatness but down on his luck, takes to a life of adventure, battles, monsters or pagans, and ends up conquering an island or ruling a kingdom.”<sup>298</sup>

Francisco de Xeres, secretary of Francisco Pizarro, describes *conquistadores* as deserving of more praise than ancient heroes “For when, either in ancient or modern times, have such great exploits been achieved by so few against so many; over so many climates, across so many seas, over such distances by land to subdue the unseen and unknown. Whose deeds can be compared to those of Spain? Not surely those of the Jews, nor of the Greeks, nor even of the Romans of whom more is written than any other people.”<sup>299</sup>

In fact, the *conquistadores* were men driven by an overwhelming desire of power and wealth, performing masculinity as it was understood in Europe at the

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<sup>298</sup> Matthew Restall & Felipe Fernández-Armesto. *The Conquistadors: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford University Press, 2011) 10.

<sup>299</sup> These are the words of Francisco de Xeres, secretary of Pizarro, in *Discovery of Perú*, (Salamanca, 1547), translated and edited by Clements R. Markham, C.B., (New York, Burt Franklin Publisher, 1963), #29, p.1 and #30, p.2, online in HathiTrust.org. For additional information about the Spanish *conquistadores* see: Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Conquerors and Chronicles of Early Medieval Spain*. (Liverpool University Press, 1999); Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700*, (2012).

time, a masculinity of domination over the new conquered peoples. This construction of masculinity in the New World with the conquerors as virile, strong Christian men, and the conquered native men as effeminate, weak pagans, helped create and support the idea that the conquest was a just, God blessed enterprise. When the *conquistadores* arrived in America, they were accompanied by large numbers of Catholic priests who were as ready and anxious to convert the native population to the true faith as the Spanish soldiers were ready to subjugate them.<sup>300</sup>

The works of colonial chroniclers explore the themes at the center of masculinity: the dichotomy of the “perfect Spanish male and the sodomite Indian,” which justified the domination of the Spaniards over the native population and helped create the powerful image of strong Spanish men while objectifying the natives and the display of examples of modern masculinity attributes of courage and religiosity, thus legitimizing such domination.<sup>301</sup> In those chronicles we see that the intention on the part of the writers is to justify and legitimize the Spanish conquest

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<sup>300</sup> Fernanda Molina is a History Professor in the College of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Buenos Aires.

<sup>301</sup> Fernanda Molina, “Crónicas de la Hombría. La construcción de la masculinidad en la conquista de América”. *Lemir, Revista de Literatura Española Medieval y del Renacimiento*, 15 (2011), 185-206.

For the discovery and colonization of Spanish America see: Juan de Castellanos, *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*. (1589), Bonaventura Carles Aribau, Ed. Madrid: Imprenta de la Publicidad, 1852; Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú* (1553), Barcelona: Linkgua ediciones S.L., 2009; Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Verdadera historia de los sucesos de la conquista de Nueva España* (1575), Madrid: Historia 16, 1985; Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*. Madrid: Historia 16, 1987; Pedro de Valdivia, *Crónicas del Reino de Chile* (1545), Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1960; Francisco de Xerez, *Verdadera Relación de la Conquista del Perú* (1534), Madrid: Historia 16, 1985

and the ensuing subjugation of the native population. To support such justification, they propose that the Spanish conquistadores possessed the qualities of the Modern period masculinity: they were courageous, devout, good military men, virile. All those traits were in full display during the Spanish Reconquista wars. After those clashes ended, many soldiers became out of work and decided to seek fortune in the American colonies.<sup>302</sup>

Most of the men who came from Spain to colonize America were not of noble origin; James Lockhart indicates that one in four of the men who defeated the Incas at Cajamarca in 1538 were *Hidalgos*. “The higher nobility, consisting of dukes, counts, lesser feudal lords, and their close relatives, almost invariably bore the title of ‘Don’ from birth. Not a single ‘Don’ was at Cajamarca.”<sup>303</sup> The first Spaniards in Perú were mostly artisans, farmers, and fortune seekers who, unable to better their standings in their communities, decided to try their luck in the Americas. Their rank in society was not as secure as the one of the nobility or even the minor gentry, who had the advantage that their pedigree granted. Therefore, they needed to prove themselves, to gain a reputation through military success, the acquisition of land, and the subjugation of natives, all accomplishments that ultimately would confer them wealth and prestige.<sup>304</sup> In the framework of the Conquest, the Spanish males who came to America were displaying the attributes of the Modern period

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<sup>302</sup> Molina, *Crónicas*, 186.

<sup>303</sup> James Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca. A Social and Biographical Study of the First Conquerors of Perú*. (Austin, University of Texas Printing, 1972), 32.

<sup>304</sup> Molina, *Crónicas*, 189.

masculinity; in the military field they were successful in accomplishing extraordinary feats in the unknown New World not just with courage but also with brutality. To reach their goals of fame and fortune, they needed to be ruthless and employ violence to follow through with the colonization project.

Potosí was a unique city, where many of the societal norms that the Spanish had embraced in their homeland had been altered and adapted to the new environment in America. However, some traditional norms and customs remained the same. Men in Potosí developed a more violent masculinity, but as husbands and fathers they found themselves following the long-established practice of arranged marriages. Future couples would enter into marriage arrangements that were based on political and economic reasons that would benefit the families. Also, men -of all ages-- usually married very young women, who were often in their early teens. As an example, we see in two accounts in the *Historia* the description of the union of 'ilustres caballeros' who married 'hermosas, discretas' maidens who were 13 and 14 years old.<sup>305</sup> As fathers, the wealth of Potosí allowed for giving their daughters substantial dowries. On the occasion of the marriage of his daughter, the Governor of Potosí, Don Bartolomé Argañaraz, gave her a dowry of 800,000 pesos and also precious stones and gold and silver jewels.<sup>306</sup> The *Historia* also describes --in colorful detail-- countless occasions when married men and women were

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<sup>305</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 176; II, 27.

<sup>306</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 28.

involved in extramarital affairs; however, details about how marriages worked, and ordinary, daily interaction between spouses, etc., is unfortunately lacking.<sup>307</sup>

Together with military boldness, religious zeal was at the center of the construction of modern masculinity. Since the Crusades, the fights for religious supremacy imbued military forces with a belief that the defense of Christianity was a quality that poured over men like a shield, a divine protection --and also a justification-- that would reward them for their bravery. A true male would use his virility to fight those who opposed --or were unaware-- of the true religion. America was then the perfect place to display these qualities since it offered not just boundless resources that generated immeasurable wealth, but also had a large native population who had to be converted to Christianity.<sup>308</sup>

Arzáns began chronicling life in Potosí, describing its foundation in 1545 and continuing with the subsequent growth of the initial mining town that would become the famous and celebrated Imperial *Villa*. Not many years separate the actions of the mentioned ruthless conquistadores from the violent historical accounts he describes in his *Historia*. The performance of masculinity on the part of those first Spaniards in America had undoubtedly carried forward into the violence that plagued Potosí since its inception.

The discovery and conquest of America was in the past by the time Arzáns undertook the chronicling of the story of Potosí and its citizens. Although he begins

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<sup>307</sup> For examples of some accounts about lust, affairs, etc., see: *Historia*, I, 405, 406; II, 103, 105, 172, 235, 279.

<sup>308</sup> Molina, *Crónicas*, 197.

the *Historia* with an account of those deeds, especially regarding the events that led to the discovery and colonization of Perú, he does it with the intention of creating a framework that would aid the reader to put Potosí in the larger context of the newly created Viceroyalty. His attitude towards these events seems to be measured since he does not offer only strong, unambiguous opinions. In many instances he seems to be proud of the accomplishment of the Spaniards in the New World, nevertheless, he makes a distinction between what happened in Nueva España and in Perú; he praises Cortés saying that some historians of Nueva España should spend less time writing about tyranny. Instead, Arzáns states, they should exalt more the “famous hero Hernán Cortés, marquis of the Oaxaca valley, whom with courage and prudence pacified that kingdom with the satisfaction and agreement of the native population”, as opposed to what happened in Perú where, since the beginning, the Spaniards acted like tyrants, with cruelty toward the native population.<sup>309</sup> Probably, he had a better assessment of what had happened, and still was happening around him, than what the real situation was in faraway Nueva España.

Influenced by the violent past and the particularities of its location, Potosí gave life to an also particular kind of masculinity, one that was hot-tempered and belligerent as discussed previously regarding the violent collective or personal interaction in the streets and fields of the *Villa*, where men were convincingly performing the role that society had established for them. Other roles were also related to their masculinity as regards to their relationship with women, the roles of

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<sup>309</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 94.

husband, father, etc. Performance of gender roles in Potosí, as in the rest of the Spanish colonies, followed the customs rooted in the dictates of the Catholic Church and the well-established traditions from Europe, including the code of honor. Just as men were supposed to be virile and strong, women needed to be supervised and controlled; their purity (sexuality) closely monitored by the men in the family, because females were unsound, incapable of taking care of their bodies, their lives. Speaking of women in the Spanish colonies, Elizabeth Kuznesof states that "... a well-ordered society was composed of well-ruled *familias*. Such *familias* were governed by patriarchs who exercised power, demanded obedience, provided maintenance, and guaranteed protection. Male prerogatives were pervasive. Nevertheless, the extent of women's legal subordination has been greatly exaggerated.<sup>310</sup> For Spanish women of the elite class, life in Potosí would not change and they were still subjected to male authority; for women of the lower classes, the colonies would offer them new possibilities of working as servants in households of members of the crown officials and other well-off individuals, or in the numerous markets around the *Villa*. In many cases, these non-elite women were able to enjoy more freedom and prosperity than what they had in Spain.

Women were equally required to satisfy a set of expectations regarding their behavior and tasks in the family. Mainly, their reputation had to be above reproach as they oversaw all domestic affairs in the household, always under the supervision

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<sup>310</sup> Elizabeth Kuznesof, "The House, the Street and the Brothel: Gender in Latin American History", *History of Women in the Americas*, 1:1 (April 2013): 17-31.

of the head of the family, the husband, father, etc. Few of the men who initially sailed to the New World after the Conquest travelled with their families; it was mostly the government officials who usually brought with them their wives and daughters. James Lockhart indicates that by 1555 between 700 and 1,000 women were in Perú, of a total of 4,000/6,000 Spanish people who, in one way or another, participated in Peruvian civil society.<sup>311</sup> The *Villa* developed quickly and chaotically after the discovery of the silver; most of the men arriving to take advantage of such discovery were mainly there to get rich and go back to Spain or find other places in America to settle down. These men, who kept arriving during the time the mines were producing large outputs, came to Perú alone, with no families; Colonial Potosí was then a city with more men than women. However, the lives of those women, mostly of the elite class, wives of Crown administrative officials, wealthy merchants, and mine owners, would remain unchanged from what they were used in Spain.

Despite Potosí following the traditional norms of Spanish society as regards to women's containment, the *Historia* is filled with accounts of women involved in extramarital affairs, illicit relations; the women in those accounts surely do not agree with the image of conventional colonial women, state Hanke and Mendoza. Tempted by love, the devil, their flesh, and lust, women participated in forbidden liaisons that, most of the time, ended in death.<sup>312</sup> Many of the historical accounts in the *Historia* illustrate these kind of illicit relationships, in which both men and

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<sup>311</sup> Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 154.

<sup>312</sup> Hanke and Mendoza, *Introduction*, clxv.

women lost control of themselves, overpowered by their sexual desires.<sup>313</sup> Arzáns is always judicious when describing these sexually suggestive situations; however, he did not seem to be reticent to touch on certain subjects such as one of an apparent case of lesbianism in one of his accounts, albeit using moderation in his choice of words.<sup>314</sup>

Regardless of the traditional belief that women, being weak and irrational, needed the control and protection of men, women in Potosí nevertheless proved to be able to demonstrate they could be in charge of themselves and their husbands or lovers, defending them from injustices or attacks on their lives.<sup>315</sup> As rigid as gender roles were established in Potosí, they could be manipulated, sometimes, to suit people's needs and desires.

As described in this chapter, although male *Potosinos* had shown a different kind of masculinity, particularly defined by its violence, in many aspects of their lives, they were following the traditional rules for display of masculinities prevailing at the time, including in their relationship with women. Nonetheless, when faced with the extraordinary circumstances of Potosí, men in the *Villa* displayed the mentioned intensified masculinity, as it will be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>313</sup> For some examples of these kind of accounts in the *Historia* see: *Historia*, I, 158; 405; 406; II, 103; 105; 172; 235; 236; 259; 279; 321.

<sup>314</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 227-228.

<sup>315</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II 62; 63,

### CHAPTER THREE

“The sight of blood to crowds begets the thirst of more  
As the first wine-cup leads to the long revel;  
And you will find a harder task to quell  
Than urge them when they have commenced.”<sup>316</sup>

“Masculinity is not something given to you, but something  
you gain. And you gain it by winning small battles, with honor.”<sup>317</sup>

### VIOLENCE

In 1602, factions in the *Villa* were engaged in disputes about the allocation of administrative positions that would bring them wealth and power. The *Corregidor*, Alvaro Patiño, failed to fulfill his duties of putting an end to those fights and dispense justice, since he had chosen a side and was helping one of the factions, which enraged even more the members of the other group. For almost two months, both factions prepared their men, weapons, and horses, and engaged in skirmishes around the *Villa*. All this tension was causing problems in the city because people were afraid of leaving their houses; work around the mines and in the shops and operations of the markets in the *Villa* were suspended because the supplies were not reaching the city. On Wednesday, March 26, the two sides [around 300 total] finally faced each other. With some of their leaders richly dressed and heavily armed, the combat began. When the fighting was over, both sides had heavy loses

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<sup>316</sup> Lord Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron, Including His Suppressed Poems*. A. and W. Galignani, Paris, 1827, 269.

<sup>317</sup> Norman Mailer, 1998 Interview for French Television.

(around 70 dead), including the *Corregidor*. The families and friends of the dead came to retrieve the bodies for their burials, and the people who witnessed such a distressing event were “horrified to see such heartbreaking incidents, happening every day in the *Villa*.”<sup>318</sup>

This violent episode was not an isolated incident. Violence was a permanent occurrence in the *Villa*; in fact, it was one of the characteristics often mentioned by visitors to colonial Potosí. Visitors marveled about the seemingly unending silver pouring from the *Cerro*, were unhappy with the miserable weather and difficult roads that led them to Potosí, and certainly were appalled regarding the violence they witnessed there. All these three concerns appeared invariably in their writings about the experience of visiting Potosí.

Spanish men in Potosí are described by Accarette Du Biscay as “*de armas llevar*,” which not only speaks of men who carried weapons but also who were ready to use them. He adds that Spaniards in Potosí were determined and fearless, all arrogant and vain.<sup>319</sup> Pedro Cañete y Domínguez states that the abundance of brawls and gangs of scoundrels roaming the streets of the *Villa*, was due to several factors: idle men --*soldados* and *vagabundos*-- who swarm around the city, creating havoc, and also the fact that Spanish towns in Perú were separated by large distances that promoted criminal activity, almost with not consequence; gamblers, vagabonds, thieves, and idle bums entered the *Villa* every day, creating disorder. He

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<sup>318</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 249.

<sup>319</sup> Accarette Du Biscay, *Viajes*, 40.

adds that men in Potosí lived as they pleased, with no restrictions, spending their time drinking, gambling, and getting involved in continuous disturbances.<sup>320</sup> Carrió de la Vandra wrote that he was sad to leave La Plata, “*una ciudad agradable*” (a pleasant city) where people were nice, but happy to leave Potosí, not just because of the inclement environment, but also as a result of the “*discordia*” (disharmony) among its inhabitants. He describes the *Villa* as a dangerous place, where people always fight with each other. It was a rarity to find men who could be friends for a whole week, he said.<sup>321</sup> Matienzo, speaking with a reliable voice about the problem of violence and crime in Potosí, since he was the Oidor of the *Audiencia de Charcas*, condemned the violence he observed in the *Villa* where men were idle, and idleness is the mother of all vices, he said. *Potosinos* fought for all kind of reasons: money, pride, greed, honor. He thought this was because men came from many different places outside Potosí, and once they arrived there, they tried to impose their own rules, they just wanted to get rich quickly, they did not care about the *Villa*.<sup>322</sup> Fray Diego de Ocaña stated that he saw many lies and little justice in Potosí, where men were killed, and afterwards, the killers paraded around town. He described brawls happening every day, with two or three men stabbed to death. It was so out of control that during the fourteen months he lived in Potosí, almost every week five or six men were murdered. People stole without fear of men or justice. Men lived the way they wanted, he added. Nobody called anybody to account. Men, even those

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<sup>320</sup> Cañete, *Guía Histórica*, 476, 568, 570.

<sup>321</sup> Carrió de la Vandra, *El Lazarillo*, 105.

<sup>322</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 313.-315.

who were educated, he said, such as artists, theologians, doctors, they all behaved like demons, stole from each other.<sup>323</sup>

As we can see from the above commentaries, Arzáns --together with other contemporary chroniclers-- all made a point to emphasize the violence that had pervaded the daily lives of the *Potosinos*. It was very difficult to stay away from violence in a place that was bursting at the seams with a large, diverse, primarily male population, most of whom had not planned to stay there for the long haul, only for the necessary time they needed to get a share of the silver fortunes, ready to achieve their goals at any cost, by any means.

This chapter explores the way in which violence in Potosí, unique and somehow uncommon as compared to other locations in the Spanish colonies, was facilitated by several distinctive circumstances that were intrinsic to the *Villa* and its surroundings. Those circumstances were: large population of jobless, idle men living in a relatively small space; isolation from other centers of colonial life; and, enormous wealth produced by the silver mines, which in turn created rivalries regarding access to such resources. Those factors, I argue, are behind the violence the *Potosinos* faced in their public and private lives. Potosí is described often as a peculiar, *sui generis* spot, mainly because it was the place where the mines produced more silver, where fortunes were greater and made quicker than in other parts of the world. As much as that peculiarity would bring prosperity, it also gave rise to extreme, nonstop violence. Potosí's uniqueness was its incredible deposits of

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<sup>323</sup> De Ocaña, *Viaje por el Nuevo Mundo*, 152, 268, 278.

silver, at levels never seen before in the world. Yet, the unrestrained, day-to-day violence in the *Villa* was undoubtedly one of the irrefutable factors that made this city a place that for the last five centuries had fascinated and intrigued many.

### A Violent Place

Although physically isolated from the rest of the world, Potosí nevertheless reflected the times. According to Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler, the Early Modern Period was a “theater of violence” in Europe, an “era of violent spectacles: hangings, quartering, burning at the stake.”<sup>324</sup> In this environment, males --in much larger number than females-- were the perpetrators of acts of violence, in most instances looking to perform their masculinity, which was constantly challenged in battle, brawls, and in everyday life in their communities. Additionally, according to the gender theory of the period, male aggression was a natural characteristic of men’s essence, therefore only men, not women, could rightfully commit violent acts. Woodbridge and Beehler state that “when women did commit violence, it was exceptional and unnatural.”<sup>325</sup> Thus, violence was normative for European men, either those living on the continent or those who had been making the newly-discovered America their home; Potosí was not the exception. In the *Historia*, violence and bloodshed are repeatedly described; the men committing those acts were of European descent, mostly Spanish and Portuguese, but there were also men

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<sup>324</sup> Woodbridge, Linda and Sharon Beehler, Eds. *Women, Violence and English Renaissance Literature: Essays honoring Paul Jorgesen*. (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), xi.

<sup>325</sup> Woodbridge, *Women, Violence*, xii.

from Italy, France, the Netherlands, and many *criollos* who, although they were born on American soil, were raised and grew up in a society mostly guided by European norms and customs.

The *Historia* is a sweeping chronicle of colonial Perú, an all-inclusive treatise of everyday life in Potosí where everything and everybody appears to have been affected and transformed by the silver, the wealth, and the violence. The latter was so pervasive that it is in fact rare to read any of Arzáns' historical accounts that do not contain a report on violence. Actually, the *Historia* begins with a description (around fifty pages) of an ultimate act of violence: the discovery and conquest of the West Indies after the arrival of the Spanish *conquistadores* in Perú, the finding of the *Cerro* and its silver lodes, the *Villa*, and its foundation. It also includes an account of Francisco Pizarro and his brothers' campaigns in Perú, and the civil wars they fought against Diego de Almagro for the control of the former Inca Empire. Pizarro and his brothers, Gonzalo and Juan, who accompanied him in the battles for the conquest of Perú, all died violent deaths, as did Almagro.<sup>326</sup> The Spanish conquest of America is filled with similar stories about internal feuds among the Spaniards, which usually ended in bloodshed. The first of Arzáns' historical accounts take place in the mid 1500s, around the time when *conquistadores'* civil wars were in the recent past but still fresh in the memories of the people of Perú. Writing about Gonzalo Pizarro and how he entertained the idea of crowning himself king of the

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<sup>326</sup> James Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca*. For Francisco Pizarro see pages 135-157; Gonzalo Pizarro, 175-189; Juan Pizarro, 168-175; Diego de Almagro, 15-16.

recently-created Viceroyalty of Perú, Arzáns says that many men in Pizarro's army committed crimes and atrocities among the loyal to the Spanish Emperor, killing many of them by violent means, and, as he adds, "without confession."<sup>327</sup> These kind of deaths would have been the cause of serious affliction for the Catholic Spaniards, since dying without receiving absolution for their sins would have condemned their souls to eternal damnation; the gates of heaven would have been closed for those men.

Past violent events during the Conquest would have certainly impacted and influenced the behavior of the Spanish men who had come to live in Potosí at the time, and who were the participants in the endless brawls that were affecting daily life in the *Villa*. Those men, generally called *soldados*, faced the difficulty of finding a suitable place to set permanent roots and create a future of their own in the colonies beyond living the itinerant life of a hired combatant. The only way they knew to improve their station was to use their militaristic skills where someone else had to lose for them to win. All this was exacerbated in Potosí because mining was the only business in town. In addition, the challenging physical environment of the area made it impossible to go into farming, raising cattle, etc. Because of the altitude and inclement weather, all supplies and provisions to support Potosí's population had to be brought from other places. The luxury items that the *Potosinos* loved to display, came from all over the world.

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<sup>327</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 53.

### Violent Men

In 1600, 10 days after the celebration of the marriage of King Phillip and Margaret of Austria, a new *Corregidor*, Alvaro Patiño, arrived in the *Villa*. In his honor, the city councilmen hosted a bullfighting event. The new *Corregidor*, however, was not entirely pleased since he had expected the *Villa* to wait until his arrival to celebrate the royal wedding. Nevertheless, the people in Potosí were enjoying themselves watching the festivities from balconies and stands around the plaza. In one of those balconies, two *Potosinos*, Martín de Igarzábal and Nicolás Enríquez, were enjoying the event when Enríquez offered some food to a woman in a nearby balcony; this offering somehow enraged Igarzábal (no reason is given) who threw Enríquez over the balcony. Enríquez' father came to the aid of his son who was alive but injured. The father went after Igarzábal who was hiding in a house, and murdered him. Afterwards, a large brawl ensued between the friends of the Enríquez and the Igarzábals. The factions went into the houses of their enemies, fighting everybody they found in their path; one of the men killed was the brother of the *Corregidor* Patiño. When the brawl was over, several men were dead and more than thirty were wounded.<sup>328</sup>

Several issues stand out in this historical account: one, the rapid eruption of a fight among men for no apparent reason; Arzáns appeared to insinuate that the two men were interested in the woman, since he inserted this observation: "The power of delight is so strong that cannot be resisted." Also, the fact that the quick, large-

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<sup>328</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 245, 246.

scale violence reflects the latent dissention between factions of different ancestral origins --the Basques fighting on the side of the Igarzábals and the Enríquez being supported by Extremadurans and Andalusians—was certainly a prelude of the *Vicuña* War that would explode in the *Villa* in the next two decades. Regardless of the actual reason for the initial assault and the ensuing bloodshed, the undeniable fact is that the men involved were quick to react and resort to violence as an answer to real or imagined provocations.

In the same year of this incident, a group of men described as “*vagamundos e inquietadores*” (vagabonds and troublemakers) were expelled from the city of La Plata because they were creating problems due to their violent behavior. After being ousted, they made their way to Potosí where they intended to carry on with their violent actions.<sup>329</sup>

The nearby, isolated, and already unruly Potosí was certainly growing in population with the kind of men who would add more violence to the already existing atmosphere.

Thus, the *Villa* was inhabited not just by a motley crowd of adventurers, gamblers, fortune-hunters and charlatans, but also by *soldados* (soldiers) and *vagabundos* (vagrants). *Soldados* is a term that appears often in writings about colonial Perú and applies certainly to former members of the Spanish armed forces who conquered Perú, but mostly to men who were unoccupied, soldiers of fortune in a sense, because, after the Conquest was over, they had been laid off; their talents

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<sup>329</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 246.

for warfare and their weapons were then for hire. These individuals had a tendency to congregate in small, not-well-planned urban areas. And no other urban center in the Spanish American colonies must have looked to them like isolated Potosí did. Speaking of the *Villa*, Hanke says: "It [Potosí] was inhabited by a society so rich and chaotic, the likes of which the world had never seen until then. Everything the *Potosinos* were involved in, --vice, crime, festivals-- was done on a larger scale."<sup>330</sup> The triumph of the Spanish armed forces over the Inca Empire was still fresh in the minds of the Spaniards in Perú, and such an enormous feat had been accomplished by soldiers; what better word to use to describe those violent men in Potosí who were still behaving with a purpose, not always noble or justified, but still involving battles. Their job now was to offer their weapons and services not to the Crown, for the glory of the Empire, but to other individuals, for money.

Certainly, the government authorities in Potosí had at their service a small number of those "real" soldiers trained as part of the Spanish Crown army; however, those soldiers were not completely fulfilling their job. Instead, they involved themselves in creating chaos around the *Villa*. Historian Gwendolyn Ballentine Cobb states that it was difficult for the soldiers posted in Potosí to make a reasonably good living because they were not allowed to participate in mining, and the wages they received were small. Often, those men were involved in disturbances around

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<sup>330</sup> Lewis Hanke commentary in the Introduction to Luis Capoche's *Relación General de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, (Madrid: Atlas, 1959), 10.

the *Villa* so as to create opportunities to plunder.<sup>331</sup> To all appearances, either “real” soldiers or *soldados*, many of the not-fully-occupied men in Potosí were creating their own “job opportunities,” and in absence of other options they resorted to what they knew and were good at.

*Soldados* and *vagabundos* congregating in Potosí and its surrounding areas were indeed contributors to the increased levels of violence in the *Villa*. They were men who had fought in the conquest wars, had no fixed residence, and were wandering aimlessly around the colonial towns and country-side, in this case in the Peruvian territories, searching for the opportunities to improve their lot. Historian Leonardo García Pabón indicates that although during the period that the *Historia* covers, the turmoil of the Conquest was already gone, there were other reasons that contributed to the increased levels of violence in the *Villa*. One of them was the large presence of these *soldados* and *vagabundos*.<sup>332</sup>

These former soldiers, like many other men previously occupied in other professions, came to Potosí attracted by the possibility of getting rich by working in the mining business. It is important to stress again that the term *soldados* did not have the same meaning we are accustomed to see today; most of the men referred to as *soldados* had in fact never been part of the ranks of a professionally-organized

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<sup>331</sup> Gwendolin Ballantine Cobb, “Potosí, a South American Frontier”, in *Greater America, Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton*, 39-58, (University of California Press, 1945), 53.

<sup>332</sup> Leonardo García Pabón, “La Adolescente en la colonia y los crímenes necesarios contra la familia. La ‘dichosa pecadora’ de Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela”. *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, Año 44, No. 88, 2018, 343.

army. James Lockhart states: "Although the conquerors themselves had never been referred to as soldiers at the time, in subsequent years the Spaniards had somehow gradually fallen into the habit of calling everyone who was not an encomendero or a tradesman, a soldier, completely regardless of the individual's possession or lack of military equipment, training or ability."<sup>333</sup> Those men who were lingering around Potosí, seemingly unoccupied, were not all former members of an official army because, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Conquest and civil wars were over, and "no standing army existed, it is self-evident that the so-called soldiers were merely vagrants."<sup>334</sup> Bolivian historian Josep P. Barnadas described a *soldado* as a "man that does not reside permanently in a city, with no fixed domicile there, someone that changes residency frequently."<sup>335</sup> In fact, the many men who gathered in Potosí at the time fit this description.

Some of those men did eventually profit from small silver claims or jobs around the *Villa*, but the majority remained unemployed, idle, carrying weapons, and looking not just for money but also trouble. These men were a large part of the participants in the violent events in Potosí that Arzáns and others describe. We also should keep in mind that colonial writers might have used the word *soldado* because it would have been a term that not only encompassed such a group of men, but also the term would have been easily recognizable and understandable among the

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<sup>333</sup> James Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 155.

<sup>334</sup> Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 155.

<sup>335</sup> Josep. P. Barnadas, *Charcas*, 148.

readers. In addition, it could have also been a mode to legitimize or give the *soldados* a patina of respectability, or in a way, permission to act the way they did.<sup>336</sup>

Vagrant men existed in Perú in large numbers. In 1555, the Marquis of Cañete, who was at the time Governor of Chile, and later Viceroy of Perú, indicated that around twenty percent of the Spanish population in the Viceroyalty was precisely this kind of group of men, “rootless and unemployed.”<sup>337</sup> Cañete estimated the population of Spanish people at 8,000, including 480 *encomenderos*, and a similar number of government officials, which leaves around 7,000 in the idle population. James Lockhart disagrees with Cañete’s numbers, reporting that the true rootless and unemployed were between 2,000 and 4,000. However, he states that: “In any case, an unemployment rate of from twenty-five to fifty percent would be a formidable problem in any society.”<sup>338</sup>

Vagrant, idle men looking for fortune definitely was one of the reasons behind the problems with violence in the *Villa*; however, this was not the only one. The isolation from other urban colonial centers, the desperate search for a share in the immense wealth coming from the silver mines, and the large number of people

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<sup>336</sup> For more on “*soldados y vagabundos*”: see: Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, (1573-1700): Compulsory Indian Labor in the Andes*, (Stanford, University Press, 1985); Kris Lane, *Potosí: The Silver City that Changed the World*, (University of California Press, 2019).

<sup>337</sup> In Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 153-154. From documents in *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y colonización de las posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía II*, 561.

<sup>338</sup> Lockhart, *Spanish Perú*, 153-154.

inhabiting a fairly small settlement were factors contributing to make Potosí a dangerous, violent place.

### Violent Times in a Colonial Boomtown

At its height, Potosí had a larger population, 160,000 at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, more than most European cities. This is the way Jesuit priest José de Acosta describes the *Villa* when he visited it in the 1570s: “On the slopes of this little mountain begins the town inhabited by Spaniards and Indians attracted by the riches and workings of Potosí. This town has a circumference of two leagues (2.86 square miles); it contains the largest population, and the most commerce, in all of Perú.”<sup>339</sup> For such a large number of people of different nationalities, ethnicities, and social standings, living in close quarters must have been difficult, to say the least, especially because the *Villa* was never carefully planned and built to properly support any level of population. Furthermore, it kept growing quickly and chaotically, as the amounts of silver produced in the mines increased. Kris Lane points out: “Like most mining towns, Potosí was an accidental city, a haphazard city, at first a tent camp in the Roman military tradition, a *real de minas* [mining town].<sup>340</sup> Cramped dwellings, unforgiving environment, and large, heterogenous population were all factors that contributed to the idiosyncratic, violent, and unrestrained behavior of the *Potosinos*. “Potosí was born in violence and controversy, first as a

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<sup>339</sup> de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History*, 173.

<sup>340</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 37.

means to finance the rebel *conquistadores*, then as a destination for native workers held in various types of serfdom, joined by enslaved men,” adds Lane.<sup>341</sup>

Potosí could be considered a colonial Andean boomtown. It certainly follows the definition: a town that grows very rapidly as a result of sudden prosperity due to the finding of natural resources and that decreases in size as fast as it initially grew, once the resources stop.<sup>342</sup> Boomtowns, like the ones generally associated with the mining camps that flourished in California after the discovery of gold in 1848, share the same characteristics we observe in Potosí after the discovery of silver: they are overcrowded, chaotic, most of the time lacking law and justice. Also present are excessive gambling and drinking, prostitution, and pervasive violence. According to Kris Lane’s description of Potosí, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the *Villa* had more places where people could indulge in all kind of vices since it had more taverns, brothels, and gambling dens (per capita) than any other cities in the Spanish empire. Consumption of stimulants --alcoholic beverages, coca and tobacco-- was also very high.<sup>343</sup> He adds that Potosí gambling and prostitution houses were built before its churches.<sup>344</sup> Prostitution usually was a profitable business in mining towns. Potosí was not the exception. In 1603, there were 120 Spanish

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<sup>341</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 44.

<sup>342</sup> From Dictionary.com

<sup>343</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 2

<sup>344</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 108.

prostitutes and also many native women that were engaged in the “*ejercicio amoroso*.”<sup>345</sup>

Towns like Potosí and the ones of the California Gold Rush were sites of economic success and also of social disruption where the difficulties caused by the constant arrival of large number of men into a small area created violence and disorder. Excessive consumption and indulgence were a constant presence in boomtowns where large numbers of taverns, gambling halls, and prostitution houses were usually found. All those establishments were catering to an overwhelmingly young and male population who had come from all over the world to strike it rich.<sup>346</sup> Fred Rosenbaum, a historian of the Jewish community in the San Francisco Bay Area, when describing the Gold Rush of 1848, is able to point out a series of characteristics of California boomtowns: large population increases after the mineral resources were found, places where justice was rare, streets raging with violence, gang warfare. He definitely could have been describing Potosí. Large numbers of people living in small areas, both in Potosí and in California, created unclean spaces filled with litter, which in many cases were the origins of diseases and pandemics.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> *Relaciones Geográficas de Indias, Volume II*, Marcos Jiménez de la Espada, Ed., (Spain, Tip. De M. G. Hernández, 1885), 113-136. From *Historia*, I, 255, Nota 8.

<sup>346</sup> Ellen Hostetter, “Boomtown Landscapes.” *Material Culture*, Vol .43, No. 2, Fall 2011, pp. 59-79.

<sup>347</sup> Fred Rosenbaum, “Boomtown: Tumult and Triumph in Gold Rush San Francisco,” Chapter in: *Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area*, (Univ. of California Press, 2009), pp. 1-35.

Tamara J. Walker emphasizes the dangers of living in an overpopulated colonial city and brings home the perils of unplanned colonial cities. She argues that Spanish women living in Lima, who wanted to safely go out of their homes where they enjoyed a sheltered life, found it very difficult to do it while at the same time protecting their virtue, since it was impossible, she adds “to attain complete physical distance, for Lima was a densely populated and growing metropolis where residents came into close proximity, on a daily basis.”<sup>348</sup> This account clearly shows how living in an crowded city in colonial Perú affected the prescribed conditions for everyday life, how it would have prevented women from venturing outside their houses without having to face unsafe situations that could place them in compromising positions regarding their honor and virtue; dangerous circumstances in an overpopulated city would affect the safety of not only women but everybody else too. Overpopulation in Potosí, particularly regarding men with unspecified occupations, was also the reason behind the pervasive violence in the *Villa*. Constant fights and brawls made the street dangerous not just for women but for all *Potosinos*.

#### Wealth, the Root of All Evil

If Potosí was a place filled with unsavory, dangerous characters, miserably cold and windy, remote from other Spanish communities, why did people keep

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<sup>348</sup> Tamara J. Walker, “Blancas Sucias’ and ‘Putas Putonas’: White Women, Cross-Caste Conflict and the Power of Words in Late-Colonial Lima, Peru”. *Gender and History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, April 2015, pp. 131-150.

coming in large numbers? José de Acosta says: “Once the discovery of Potosí became known in the kingdom of Perú many Spaniards went there, along with most of the citizens of the city of La Plata, which is eighteen leagues (fifty-four miles) from Potosí, to establish mining claims.”<sup>349</sup>

It was the silver then that acted like a magnet, the silver that flowed incessantly from the veins of the *Cerro*, the silver that could give the opportunity of achieving immense wealth fairly quickly. Josep Barnadas makes it very clear in the following statements that the enormous amount of silver found in Potosí was the main reason behind the violence displayed by people in the city: “Apparition of riches unknown until then attracted people to Potosí, not aiming to conquer or carrying out a ‘pacific urbanization.’ Instead, “since its origins, Potosí did not owe its birth to the policy of any government but only to the eternally effective sparkle of the silver. Those particular beginnings would define the character of its inhabitants in all their actions, individually or as a whole.”<sup>350</sup> In Potosí, he adds, greed, envy, and revenge, all contributed to create an environment of omnipresent turmoil; death, brawls, and jealous lovers’ fury were constant occurrences in the *Villa*.<sup>351</sup> *Potosinos* were definitely guided by recklessness and greed.<sup>352</sup> The unique circumstances of Potosí

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<sup>349</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History*, 175.

<sup>350</sup> Barnadas, *Charcas*, 36-37.

<sup>351</sup> For historical accounts of greed in the *Historia* see: I, 94, 109, 134, 140, 150, 213, 216, 219, 226, 248, 299, 300, 322, 339, 357; II, 72, 190, 191, 295, 441; III, 2, 3, 56, 74, 78, 167, 171, 176, 212. For envy: I, 158, 199, 267; II, 130, 471, 472, 484; III, 166. For jealous lovers: I, 271, 313; II, 79, 99, 105, 175, 215, 442. For deaths and brawls see Note 38.

<sup>352</sup> Barnadas, *Charcas*, 159.

then, overpopulation, isolation, extreme wealth, created a toxic blend that inevitably would breed violence.

The *Villa* was a place detached from the rest of the world, where laws frequently seemed not to exist and usually were not respected. It was a place ruled by savage, uncontrolled behaviors. It was almost as if each group of people in the *Villa* was part of a distinct world, and the survival of one group hinged on the destruction of the other group. Loyalties fluctuated according to which advantages or disadvantages were at play, which insults or offenses were committed, or which sides were in power at the time in the city. Describing the violence in Potosí, Arzáns states: “The circumstances [in the *Villa*] were such that men simply walking in the streets constituted a crime and not a day went by without brawls, deaths, injuries.”<sup>353</sup> Indeed, the period covered in the *Historia*, 1545-1737, was defined by constant internal violence in the *Villa*. Historian Leonardo García Pabón concludes

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<sup>353</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 318.

For some historical accounts on disturbances, brawls, etc. in Potosí in Arzáns *Historia* see:

I, 73-74; I, 79-85; I, 102-108; I, 119-123; I, 123-125; I, 125-128; I, 132-134; I, 134-136; I, 136-139; I, 139-142;  
 I, 148-151; I, 176-178; I, 206-209; I, 249-252; I, 255-258; I, 280-281; I, 313-402 (several related to the Vicuna Wars); II, 20-23; II, 54-59; II, 59-63; II, 68-71; II, 75-81; II, 82-87; II, 87-90; II, 91-94; II, 95-99; II, 103-109;  
 II, 109-114; II, 114-118; II, 119-122; II, 134-137; II, 138-143; II, 147-149; II, 149-155; II, 161-169;  
 II, 179-183; II, 194-199; II, 200-205; II, 213-218; II, 219-224; II, 225-231; II, 231-235; II, 235-240; II, 241-247;  
 II, 251-255; II, 291-297; II, 408-414; II, 425-432; II, 432-438; II, 451-459; II, 494-501; III, 53-60; III, 171-174;  
 III, 196-201; III, 201-206; III, 213-218; III, 316-320; III, 321-325; III, 336-340.

that the omnipresent and uncontrollable violence described by Arzáns is also in part connected to the inherent nature of the colonial system.”<sup>354</sup>

Numerous historical accounts in the *Historia* have violence at the center; in fact, violent behavior in Potosí appears early in Arzáns’ work, in the first one hundred pages of the first volume. Many of these accounts reflect the violent place Potosí was, how its inhabitants had a disregard for the law and the authorities. Violence in Potosí was used to settle disputes that in other locations --Madrid, Mexico City, Lima-- would have been adjudicated institutionally. *Potosinos* did not seem to be inclined to use the court system to solve any kind of disputes. It appears they wanted to solve those issues personally and in quick fashion, mainly for two reasons: those usually involved in quarrels, disputes, etc. were mostly men that were used to solving problems with their fists or their weapons; also, seeking justice in the courts would not be fast.

Men behaving badly could be found in all walks of life, anywhere. However, Potosí seemed to have attracted a particular kind of men performing a particular kind of masculinity: brazen, unrestrained. The outrageous men in Potosí were sometimes desperate because they saw their chances of a prosperous future dwindle and disappear, and they were left with few, mostly bad choices. For that reason, perhaps they did not see the murdering of their opponents in the *Villa* as an actual crime; they were living according to survival-of-the-fittest mode. Revenge crimes were usually those in which the perpetrators felt their actions were justified.

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<sup>354</sup> García Pabón, “La adolescente”, 343.

The physical environment of Potosí --isolated, crowded, tempting with the sometimes unreachable wealth flowing steadily from the nearby *Cerro*-- was a stage where the actors --the *Potosinos*-- were ready to engage in violent acts to defend their honor, and to achieve their goals, whatever they might have been, individually, or as a group: “The square and adjacent streets, later known as “the little cobbled square” (el empedradillo), would serve as a public theater of violence, particularly for footloose Spanish men anxious to defend their honor.”<sup>355</sup>

### Collective Violence

Undoubtedly, the *Vicuña Wars* or War of the *Vicuñas* and the Basques is the major event of collective violence in Potosí.<sup>356</sup> Historian Paulina Numhauser’s powerful passage about the *Vicuña Wars* thoroughly describes its connection with violence and revenge in the *Villa*:

“The events [the *Vicuña Wars*] could be covered in the style of a police report. It began in June 1622, when in a Potosí alley, covered in stab wounds and mutilated, the corpse of Juan de Urbieta, strong man of the Basques, was found. This triggered a thirst for revenge among the members of the Basque nation, marking the beginning of a series of bloody encounters that would cause hundreds of deaths and victims in both sides.”<sup>357</sup>

This bloody armed conflict took place between 1622 and 1625 when feuding Basques --on one side-- and all the other regional factions or “naciones”

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<sup>355</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 31.

<sup>356</sup> The non-Basque side, the *Vicuñas*, usually wore hats made with the fur of the animal, similar to the llama and the alpaca.

<sup>357</sup> Paulina Numhauser, “Un Asunto Banal: Las Luchas de Vicuñas y Vascongados en Potosí, (Siglo XVII)”, *Illes i imperis*, 2013-04-01 (14), 113-138.

Andalusians, Extremadurans, Castilians, etc. who resided in the *Villa* --on the other side--, went up against each other in frequent skirmishes, to settle issues of power over the city government and control of the most lucrative mining operations.

Although the height of the wars happened during those three years, the confrontations between the two sides were a problem in Potosí almost since its beginnings and had also spread to nearby places. Several isolated confrontations between Basques and *Vicuñas* were taking place in Potosí before the official beginning of the civil war in 1622. For example, 40 men were killed in an altercation that took place in Potosí in 1548. Since this bloody day, Arzáns stated, the fights among the sides of the different regions in Spain would become a permanent occurrence in the *Villa*, the cause of death and calamity.<sup>358</sup>

Tensions between the two sides were rooted in the generalized dislike of the Basques because they had managed to almost monopolize the mining business and were occupying many of the important posts in the local government. The Basques, a group of hardworking Spaniards, became very successful in Potosí through their work ethic initially, and later because they used their wealth to influence officials to favor their positions. Obviously, this did not go well with the other regional factions: “By the late 1610s, resentment of Basque dominance in Potosí was boiling over.”<sup>359</sup> Eventually, the assassination of an important member of the Basque community --

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<sup>358</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 62.

<sup>359</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 113.

Juan de Urbieta-- was the provocation that triggered the civil war.<sup>360</sup> After three years of constant and bloody encounters between both sides, a shaky peace was attained. Jeffrey A. Cole states that such peace was agreed because the civil war was taking a toll on everybody in the *Villa*, and the prospect of violent clashes would not end since neither side appeared to be able to win.<sup>361</sup>

These civil wars created unrest in the *Villa* due to the disruption of the silver production --the main sources of work and income for the *Potosinos*-- and the everyday activities in the city; large numbers of men died or were seriously wounded. The following is certainly one of the most chilling descriptions from Arzáns about how the civil war was affecting the *Villa*:

“Some would have their arms, feet and other parts of their bodies torn in a slow manner, until they died. Others, would have the skin on their bodies chopped up in many pieces with daggers and small knives, their bones later grated. Others, would have their entrails ripped out and used to make ropes; the dead bodies were abandoned in fields where dogs would eat them. They even used the cavities the cut out entrails had left in the bodies as feeding containers; those would be filled with barley and straw for the horses to eat. They would use the skin of men’s insides to wrap around the drums they beat during the battles.”<sup>362</sup>

Arzáns continues explaining that those atrocities were not just directed to one of the sides in the conflict, but in fact, those abominations were done to everybody living in “this hapless *Villa*, to people of all ages, genders or status. Even women would be murdered if they were found to have helped the enemy.”<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Alberto Crespo Rodas, *La Guerra entre Vicuñas y Vascongados, Potosí 1622-1625*. (La Paz, Bolivia: Talleres Gráficos Don Bosco, 1969) 83-87.

<sup>361</sup> Cole, *The Potosí Mita*, 50.

<sup>362</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 321.

<sup>363</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 322.

The *Vicuña Wars* exemplifies extreme collective violence in Potosí. Surely disagreements among citizens in towns around Spanish Colonial America was a frequent occurrence; however, the level of violence the *Potosinos* of different Spanish regions engaged with each other for such a long period suggests an over-the-top, unusual aggressivity and ferocity that could not even be tamed by authorities. That was definitely not the case in Potosí where the divisions between the regional groups were deep. The fragmented community would unwillingly be the locale of grisly free-for-alls, deadly melees that when they ended not only caused large numbers of dead (6,000) and wounded (4,000) and that had also affected the normal operations of the Potosí mines and its many related businesses.<sup>364</sup>

This long and bloody period of civil war in Potosí affected the fabric of the *Villa*, its society, and its economy. It also brought to the surface deep rooted ethnic and status issues, creating a complicated conflict about power and access to wealth. These recurrent encounters between the sides, as consequential as they were for the *Villa*, were, by no means, the only violent armed clashes involving groups of men fighting, not just to defend regional divisions but for a wide array of other reasons such as greed, revenge, etc. Such is the case of the historical account of an event involving people behaving violently in the city, a case that happened in the *Villa* between the Judge Francisco Esquivel and a soldier named Aguirre. In 1549 a group of soldiers were leaving the *Villa* on a mission to pacify the nearby region. They

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<sup>364</sup> Kris Lane, *Pandemic in Potosí. Fear, Loathing, and Public Piety in a Colonial Mining Metropolis*. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 77.

were using natives to carry their provisions, which was banned by the authorities. All in the group of soldiers were allowed to leave the city with their carriers, except Aguirre who was stopped and sentenced to receive 200 lashes because he could not pay the penalty fee for using native labor. Aguirre claimed he was the son of a *Hidalgo* and would rather accept death than face the dishonor of paying the fees or receiving the lashes. The judge complied and sentenced Aguirre to death. Several of Aguirre's friends supported him because they considered that justice had been denied to a noble man. While waiting for his execution, Aguirre fled, and the judge later moved to Cuzco. Aguirre followed him, seeking vengeance for the injustice he suffered, and killed the judge. Some of Aguirre's loyal supporters hid him until it was safe for him to leave Cuzco. In this historical account, Arzáns draws on themes of honor, class, and injustice: Aguirre and his friends felt that as nobles, their honor was being under attack; the rights of a noble person were higher and more important than any issue related to labor among the natives; and, in their view, Aguirre and his friends did not receive the proper justice they deserved.

This account shows how men in Potosí dealt with and solved grievances using violence, not just the person who feels he has been subjected to injustice, but also how such person could rapidly gain the support of other *Potosinos* who would run to his aid, even if it meant disobeying the authorities, and, in many cases, also got involved in brawls, even murder, to obtain what they deemed was unfairly denied to them. Juan de Matienzo, *Oidor* of the *Audiencia of Charcas*, stated that uproars and disturbances, so often happening in many parts of Perú, were caused by

idle men who spread dissension among people; the reason for quarrels, revolts ,and scandals were mostly related to issues of honor and money.<sup>365</sup> The case of Aguirre must have shaken all echelons of the society in the *Villa* because it touched different sectors of the community: population --elite, military, natives--and it grew from a minor incident into a serious matter that ended in the death of a Crown official. Proof of this is the fact that El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega also included the story of Aguirre in the Second Part of his *Comentarios Reales*, his major work for which he used oral history and his personal experiences as sources.<sup>366</sup>

The Aguirre incident is one among several hundred mentioned in the *Historia* that reflect the violent environment of Potosí, both in the public and private spheres of its society. Due to the large number of these kinds of historical accounts, a selection of cases of violence will be used for the purpose of analysis in this work.<sup>367</sup> These cases are the ones that best illustrate these types of events, “routine street fights” as Gunnar Mendoza described them. Mendoza adds that those incidents happened frequently, almost daily, in the *Villa*.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 313.

<sup>366</sup> El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega mentions Aguirre’s incident in his *Comentarios Reales de Los Incas*, Segunda Parte, Libro VI, Capítulo XVIII, pgs. 76-82. Nueva Ed. Madrid: Hijos de Doña Catalina Piñuela, 1829.

<sup>367</sup> A list of the *Historia*’s historical accounts involving collective violence appears in Note 38.

<sup>368</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, lcv. Mendoza also indicates that documentation about these daily disturbances in Potosí can be found in the Bolivian National Archives in Sucre, and also in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville where correspondence and records from the Royal Audience of Charcas are kept.

Another noted case that depicts collective violence recounts the “bloody clashes and grueling brawls” that took place in the *Villa* in 1552, in which a Basque individual, Gudínez, was involved. Gudínez’ deeds are frequently cited in Diego Fernández’ (El Palentino) 1571 *Historia del Perú*.<sup>369</sup> Arzáns describes Gudínez as a “respectable gentleman” who was a “highly regarded caballero.” Gudínez had “*estima*” (reputation), unlike many other men who had arrived in the New World. However, Gudínez was “*inquieta*” (restless), which coupled with the abundance of wealth the silver generated in the *Villa*, sent him along the wrong path, becoming arrogant, combative, and defiant of the law. At the time, there were more than 400 *soldados* in Potosí from different regions from Spain. Understanding how those idle men who had previously been involved in many missions all over the world and were just loafing around the *Villa*, Gudínez managed to keep them under his control with gifts and promises of power. Arzáns indicates those *soldados* were the sort of men who were always ready to follow and fight for an individual who can pay for their services, in any kind of legal or illegal personal or collective enterprises. He adds that they were licentious and enjoyed the sound of weapons in battle. Basically, Gudínez had the intention of creating his own army to use to his personal advantage. To achieve his goal, Gudínez told the *soldados* to be ready when called to serve in a mission. To do so, they should keep training at any cost, even if it meant fighting often among themselves or against others in Potosí. Gudínez’

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<sup>369</sup> Diego Fernández, (El Palentino), *Primera y Segunda Parte de la Historia del Perú*, (Sevilla, 1571). Read online, HahtiTrust, Digital Library. Diego Fernández was a Spanish historian and chronicler that travelled to Perú in 1545.

recommendation resulted in bloodthirsty daily brawls in the *Villa*, and not even those in charge of keeping order in the city were able to stop their savage behavior.<sup>370</sup> Dangerous situations like the one sponsored by Gudínez created an atmosphere where men would become aggressive and belligerent, which in turn promoted daily fights in the *Villa*. These brawls were a never-ending problem in Potosí, causing bloodshed, and the practice of bullying, wounding, and killing became routine.

One of the most violent battles between Gudínez and his enemies occurred in February, 1552. On Shrovetide Sunday, the two groups faced each other in a formalized and ritualized way. On one side were the men from Castille, Extremadura, and *Criollos*; on the other side men from Andalusia, Portugal, and other foreigners. Each group had their captains and flags, one side dressed in yellow, the other in red. After fighting for two hours, 26 men were dead and 60 wounded. Events involving the actions of Gudínez in the *Villa* are also covered in Barnadas' *Charcas*, where he describes Gudínez as an "*hombre fuerte*" (strong man) leader of a group of 250 "*soldados*" in La Plata. Gudínez entered Potosí with the intention of taking over the government of the city. Barnadas indicates the "*soldados*", always ready for assisting a side in the fight, were a nightmare for the authorities, who did not have a lasting solution for the problem they were causing.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 74.

<sup>371</sup> Barnadas, *Charcas*, 110-116.

These street combats in the *Villa* would also originate from personal disputes, which in turn included the participation of larger groups of people supporting one side or the other; the next example, from the *Historia*, falls in this category. In 1602, the *Corregidor* in Potosí wanted to punish a group of people who opposed him. The opportunity came for him when he decided to go after the group, claiming they were responsible for the death of one of his nephews. Large numbers of *Potosinos* became involved either on the *Corregidor's* side, who was claiming revenge for his relative's death, or with the group who opposed the *Corregidor*, claiming he was not fulfilling his obligations as a judge when he became the leader of a vengeful gang. For a couple of months, both groups prepared for the confrontation, gathering men and weapons. All these preparations were causing uneasiness among the people in the *Villa*, often leading to the cessation of work in the city and in the *Cerro*. Finally, in March of 1602, combatants on both sides gathered in the place chosen for the performance of a ritualized and formalized battle, in the outskirts of the *Villa*. Some members of the clergy placed themselves in the open field, between the sides, so as to prevent the fight; unfortunately, they were unsuccessful, and the bloody combat proceeded as planned, ending with high casualties: from both sides combined, around 50 were dead and 60 wounded.<sup>372</sup>

### Interpersonal Violence

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<sup>372</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 252-255.

Arzáns' historical accounts of collective violence grabs our attention because they involved large numbers of people, many of whom would be dead or wounded at the end of the incident, and the savagery and cruelty displayed reached levels not often found in other colonial chronicles. Although interpersonal acts of violence in Potosí refer usually to one-on-one violence, or sometimes, a very small group of people (the person and a family member, or a few friends, committing the crime on another person), the description of these events is no less striking. It was as if the *Potosinos* were almost inoculated against violent behavior after years of civil wars, internal regional fights, and also by witnessing daily how no value was placed in the lives of the native population working in the mines. For example, in 1604, a man was killed because he had an adulterous affair with a married lady. Two groups of people were formed to defend the lady's honor and that of the dead man. Vicious battles went on for several weeks in which both sides expanded their numbers by including servants and slaves. These fights spread over the *Villa* with clashes on the streets, houses, markets, and squares; casualties were in the dozens, Arzáns states, adding that this event was just one of this kind occurring in the *Villa* that year.<sup>373</sup>

In 1656, not a single day had passed without fights in the *Villa*; the one in question involved the discovery of three women beaten to death.<sup>374</sup> Bloody encounters ensued, with, as usual, bands formed with the relatives of the women on

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<sup>373</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 255.

<sup>374</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 165.

one side and the men accused of having committed the murders on the other side. For days, the ghastly feuds continued, and many casualties occurred. Any kind of bands or factions that were created to solve any dispute would invariably end in deep divisions, which in turn would lead to brawls and certainly more deaths.

One of the reasons why violence reigned supreme in Potosí was that it had an abundance of violent men among its citizens and scarce and corrupt policing, thus turning the *Villa* into an unsafe, unrestrained space. The principal government official in Potosí was the *Corregidor*; he was the chief political administrator and principal law enforcement officer in the city. Under him, there was a bailiff and fourteen lieutenants who were responsible for maintaining order in the city, acting as a municipal force. During his visit to Potosí between 1572 and 1575, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo introduced several reforms that affected everyday life in the *Villa*: the establishment of the *Mita*, the adoption of a new process of amalgamation using mercury that would create a better method of refining silver thus increasing the production, the creation of the Potosí Mint, and also the decision to move the *Corregidor* who had been ruling over Potosí from his seat in the city of La Plata to reside in the *Villa*.<sup>375</sup> The main reason for this move was the increased silver production that was turning Potosí into the wealthiest city in the Spanish colonies. Having the *Corregidor* supervising onsite all things and offices related to the mining business was necessary, since the city and its silver output were constantly growing. However, the number of officials policing criminal activity in the *Villa* did not match

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<sup>375</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 95.

the population numbers, a population that was being constantly increased by the influx of newcomers arriving to participate in the silver bonanza. This imbalance made the *Villa* an extremely violent place.

Cañete, in his work on political and legal guidance about Potosí, written in the 1700s, discusses and offers solutions to solve the problem of violence, an issue that had been plaguing the city for almost two hundred years. He complained about the large influx of foreigners, lack of policing and presence of troops in the city to keep the peace, lack of order and abundance of all kind of vices, which, he said, inevitably would lead to disorder and violence in society. He prescribed the removal of undesirables from the *Villa*, by going into houses to find suspicious men, loose women, gamblers, and vagabonds and banish them from the city. He also stated that public force policing is essential to keep the peace. Therefore, he recommended that the *Villa* have a permanent military troop of half the size of the troop assigned to the other provinces. He also advocated for the improvement of the justice system, which he considered inadequate; criminals did not receive the punishment they deserved, or, if they did, it came too late after the facts. He also suggested the improvement of the jail system because it seemed to him that people could leave when they wanted, after being incarcerated.<sup>376</sup>

### Honor, Shame, Revenge

“Honour and shame are the constant preoccupation of individuals in small scale, exclusive societies where face to face personal, as opposed to anonymous relations are of paramount importance and where the social

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<sup>376</sup> Cañete, *Guía*, 475-477, 567, 570-571.

personality of the actor is as significant as his office."<sup>377</sup>

In Spain, and in the Spanish American Colonies, Spanish men were considered to have honor when they performed with valor in battle, also when they carried out their affairs honorably. An honorable man would live virtuously, take care of his family --their wellbeing and reputation--, especially regarding that of the women in his household. If a woman lost her reputation due to shameful sexual behavior, such loss would affect not just her but also all the rest of the family as well. Consequently, men had to defend attacks on their personal reputation and also guard the decency of their households. Reputation was everything, so much that men, and women too, went to all lengths to protect it and fend off any attacks that could damage or destroy it. Also, honor was not just the concern of individuals who belonged to the high class in society; people from the lower classes --men and women--, took pain in defending their honor too. Unfailingly, people would seek revenge following honor offenses, as is described by Arzáns in the following historical accounts.

In the first, the desire for revenge is aroused by the decision of the Potosí *Corregidor* to garrote two men accused of killing two other men in a sword fight in the outskirts of the city. The relatives and friends of the men sentenced to die complained to the authorities but decided to take matters in their own hands because their complaint was not heard. The relatives and friends then tried to

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<sup>377</sup> J. G. Peristiany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*. (University of Chicago Press, 1966), 11.

assassinate the *Corregidor*, who survived the attempt. Consequently, the *Corregidor* went after them, killing two men of those who tried to murder him. These calamities could not had been prevented, not even by reason or justice.<sup>378</sup> The second account is the story of a young woman who falls in love with a man. They become lovers, and when her mother finds out, she decided to take action to clear the shame that her daughter's actions brought into their family. The young man tells the mother that he would give her daughter money, as a dowry, because he was not able to marry her. After hearing this, the mother killed her daughter, the only way she saw fit to save the honor of their family. This pattern of honor attack followed by shame, followed by revenge, followed by violence, seems to be used as solution/consolation for the offenses. Spaniards in Colonial America frequently used violence to respond to assaults to their honor; however, *Potosinos* seemed to elevate the frequency and level of violence used in response to affronts.

In Potosí, a rather private situation such as a man savagely killing his wife in a jealous frenzy,<sup>379</sup> a woman seeking revenge on the man who raped her,<sup>380</sup> a man enraged after an attack on his honor,<sup>381</sup> etc., would easily create a violent response or turn into a large brawl due to the inclusion of friends and/or family members of the offended and the offender. Often these are the circumstances Arzáns relates in his *Historia*, with both sides battling, many times to death, in defense of their causes.

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<sup>378</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 182-183.

<sup>379</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 158-159.

<sup>380</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 235-238.

<sup>381</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 403.

What made those honor clashes so much more excessive and fiercer is the peculiar situation of Potosí, both regarding its geographical location --isolated, high in the Andes, far away from other cities-- and also its large population living in a small area in which it would have been almost impossible to cover up any dubious occurrences.

At the same time, a place like Potosí, with its dark alleys, fast-paced life, and abundant money to pay for loose life/vices, was also conducive to illicit affairs that many times did not just end because lovers stop loving, or got tired of each other. Instead, those affairs ended in violence and death. One of those cases involves a rich, noble woman, Magdalena Tellez in the mid 1600s. She had been given in marriage to a gentleman she did not love and who died suddenly after a short period of time. Many in the *Villa* suspected that Magdalena had poisoned him. When she had altercation with another woman in church, Magdalena decided to kill the other woman's husband who had tried to defend his wife from the ire of Magdalena. She could not satisfy her desire for revenge, although she made some attempts, because this man was always in the company of relatives and servants. Once Magdalena remarried, she tried to involve her new husband in the murder she was unable to carry out. Since Magdalena believed that her husband was taking too long to do it and doubted he really had the intention to carry out her wishes, enraged Magdalena murdered him. She was sent to jail for the crime, and although many of her rich friends made several attempts to free her, she was finally hanged. Another wealthy woman in Potosí, Doña Clara, had many lovers, many of whom she murdered. In another case Francisco Verazano, a young man from a good family had been

involved with several women since he was a teenager. Falling in love with a young lady, he married her. Unfortunately, Verazano found that she was having an affair with another man. He killed his wife's lover and had to leave the city to avoid being caught. His life after that is a continual series of affairs with both single and married women, until his death.

The theme of honor/*honra* is often cited by Arzáns as the rationale behind many of the violent events that plagued the *Villa*, either in collective or interpersonal violence. An example of the former is his description of a bloody encounter during the *Vicuña Wars* in 1622, where Arzáns stresses how significant *honra* was for the *Potosinos*, how it had to be respected, defended, recovered, if lost: "neither Potosí nor Perú has seen a clash of bravery like this, because in both sides the fight was between valor and nobility. In their opinion, they were fighting for their honor, and although they were people who possessed wealth and the good things in life, they were ready to lose everything, even their lives." *Honra*, he continues, "is the greatest possession, the one we all seek, the one that takes preeminence over others, the highest happiness and treasure we can reach in this life. It is even more dear to people than the sweet love of children, the affection of women, the tranquility of homes and motherlands; not much value is placed in lives, and they are given up for *honra* at every turn."<sup>382</sup>

In most instances, responses to honor offenses unfolded as revenge acts in the *Historia* historical accounts. The next three examples represent events where

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<sup>382</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 338.

individuals were faced with assaults to their reputations and the lengths they went to resolve these issues. The first one is an account from 1641 in which a man and a woman, brother and sister, went after two women who, in the opinion of the siblings, had dishonored them. In the end the brother and sister were murdered by the two women after a bitter fight. Arzáns comments on this event, expressing the sorrow of seeing young lives shattered --two dead, the other two having to run away-- all paying the price of placing their *honra* above everything else: "Who caused this evil but *honra*? This vain honor, because it carried out so many evils and fulfilled the revenge."<sup>383</sup>

In 1644, new authorities arrived in Potosí who caused personal grievances and disagreements among some *Potosinos*. Among those, a merchant that was asked by the new *Alcalde*, Julio Omedes Adorno, to perform the duties of *verdugo* (executioner), a position he had occupied in another city before coming to Potosí, since the person regularly performing the executions was nowhere to be found. The merchant had been trying to hide that part of his past and was not happy that the new *Alcalde* had uncovered his secret; executioners were despised by the town folk since the profession was considered to be shameful. Many times, they were forced to live outside or at the edge of the town. This offense was so serious to the merchant, to the point that he felt he needed to take revenge on the *Alcalde*, so he murdered him since he felt the *Alcalde* had disgraced his *honra*. The far-reaching consequences of the merchant's actions was that he had to escape the *Villa*. The

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<sup>383</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 85.

irony, he would leave behind the new life he had created for himself, instigated by the powerful call of revenge. Commenting, Arzáns focused on the futility of vengeance when he states that all kind of men, rich and poor, smart and foolish, officers and merchants, they all desire and seek *honra* with all their might. *Honra* is the sweetest thing of all; if it is damaged, the desire to avenge such insult would probably never disappear.<sup>384</sup>

Violence in Potosí was an ever-present calamity. It has been thoroughly covered by Arzáns and others; reports on the extreme violence displayed by the *Potosinos* are supported by contemporaneous chroniclers who included in their works how disturbing the violence they observed in Potosí was. Many argue today that what Arzáns writes is not always historically factual, that some dates or names in his *Historia* are wrong. However, the issue of Potosí being violent is unquestionable. As previously indicated, travelers who visited Potosí during the period covered in the *Historia* stated that the *Villa* was unusually unruly and the *Potosinos* were remarkably violent, at levels not observed in other locations of Colonial Spanish America. Writing about men and masculinity in Colonial Mexico, Sonya Lipsett-Rivera states: “For most of the colonial period, both officials and the general population kept a lid on violence, with some eruptions at regular intervals, such as during religious festivities, that allowed social inversions and rule

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<sup>384</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 97-98.

breaking.”<sup>385</sup> On the other hand, the violence *Potosinos* displayed was on a daily basis, brutal, and ready to erupt at the slightest provocation.

The violence in Potosí was not just destructive of human bodies but also harmful to the general welfare of the whole *Villa*. If violence erupted around the city, the mines and the mills were not fully working and the markets and the shops were not doing business, helping customers, making money for their owners. When violence happened, the whole city was in trouble. One did not need to be one of the men involved in the fights, or a family member of the dead or wounded, to be affected by violence. Because if the city came to a standstill by a brawl big enough, as they usually were, no food was available because deliveries could not arrive due to the dangerous conditions in the *Villa*; when blood was spilled in every corner, literally or figuratively, all *Potosinos* were afflicted.

This chapter defines and explains violence as an unfortunate but inherent feature of everyday life in Potosí. Violence was a by-product of the militaristic side of the Conquest, which bred a problematic order of men. These men were unsettled, unoccupied, and their only concern was to take advantage of the rich veins of the mines and make a fortune, the bigger and faster, the better. They lived for the day and had no roots in the community. It was all about themselves and how to survive another day to fight another fight and see if they could position themselves on the side of powerful people and obtain a share of power and money. They were not farmers, merchants, or worked in the mine related business; they did not carry

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<sup>385</sup> Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Origins of Macho*, 6.

tools, they carried weapons. The ills of this colonial mine boomtown, the freezing temperatures, barren soil, and isolation from the rest of the world, were responsible for Potosí's utmost affliction: the violence that disrupted everyday life and created enormous anguish and deaths in the *Villa*.

Violent behavior, however pervasive it was, was just one side of many of the men in Potosí. The next chapter explores their involvement in devotion and piety and how that manifested in the magnificent celebrations and festivals they organized, which would have not been possible without the wealth generated by the silver mines.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERFORMING PIETY AND MASCULINITY

“And, if this *Imperial Villa of Potosí*, my homeland, is still standing despite all the calamities, it is only because its dwellers, who although they are sinners, had shown to the Lord their devotion to Him. We should not be surprised that in the early days of the *Villa*, alms and expenditures in festivals dedicated to the Lord reached unbelievable amounts of money, since the revenues [from the *Cerro* mines] were in the millions. What is admirable is that in these days, when the *Cerro* does not provide, these dwellers’ donations to the temples continue to be as rich and generous as in the past.”<sup>386</sup>

This excerpt in the *Historia*, referring to devotion and alms-giving in Potosí, draws attention to several issues that explains the reason behind how the *Potosinos* reacted to the hardships that befell them, in particular the concept of sin and punishment that defined their view of the relationship they had with God.<sup>387</sup> Arzáns’ perspective refers to the significance of the generous donations of the *Potosinos* who, although the silver production was down from the high levels of the past, did not reduce their donations or spending in lavish festivals. Those who were donating and spending were mostly men, wealthy enough to be able to do it; they were the elite members of society, the owners of the mines and refineries, the

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<sup>386</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 416.

<sup>387</sup> For Hanke and Mendoza’s analysis on the *Potosinos*’ preoccupation with guilt and punishment as an explanation to the ills of Potosí’s tribulations, see *Introduction*, clviii-clx.

merchants and government officials. All those *Potosinos* were still giving to charity and spending as generously as they did in the memorable past when celebrating religious and secular festivities. Arzáns' statement is certainly very important because it speaks of one of the aspects of the performance of masculine piety in the *Villa*: the charitable works destined to help those in need. Other aspects of the masculine performance of piety includes the work men did as members of their churches and *cofradías* --institutions where men could be involved in charity as good Christians-- but were also taking steps to cement their position and status in the *Villa* through utilizing their religiosity. Men in the *Villa*, mainly those involved in the mining business, merchants, etc., were pious and generous with their time and money in their involvement in religious activities, but they were also concerned with showing their power and status in the community. The wealth they amassed allowed them to gain places of preeminence when sitting in church or walking in the processions, for instance, when their fortunes were on display by virtue of the clothes and jewels they wore.

This chapter examines different aspects of male performance of piety and devotional practices in Potosí and how such performance represented the dual role they had in mind, one of both true adherence to their Christian faith and the display of their prestige and clout in the community. It also considers how the peculiar characteristics of Potosí, isolation, large population, and immense wealth, defined its citizens' relationship with God. Just as the city of Potosí was full of contradictions, male *Potosinos* also performed their masculinity in different and contradictory

ways. Like the two sides of a Potosí minted silver coin, the world's famous *pieces of eight*,<sup>388</sup> men in Potosí could display the licentious and violent aspects of their masculinity in some circumstances and, in other situations --when performing piety and devotion, for instance-- they were able to comport themselves in more thoughtful ways.

### Religion in Potosí

Colonial Potosí was essentially a Baroque Catholic city where its inhabitants strongly believed that devotion and piety would help them to atone their sins. Several opulent churches and chapels--around 20-- could be found in the *Villa* in the sixteenth century. These places of worship would become even more lavish after rich *Potosinos* left them money in their wills. Also, many priests came to Potosí to ask for donations, even from remote places in the Middle East such as Baghdad.<sup>389</sup> The emphasis that the Catholic Church assigned to charitable works is explicit in the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "If our church is not marked by the caring for the poor, the oppressed, the hungry, we are guilty of heresy."<sup>390</sup>

People's life in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was marked by deeply-felt religious beliefs. In Spain, the Crown and the Catholic Church

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<sup>388</sup> The silver coins minted in Potosí had a face value of eight *reales* which was the equivalent of a *peso*. The words *reales* and *pesos* were not used for the coins minted in America; those coins were just called eights. From Jack Weatherford, *The History of Money: From Sandstone to Cyberspace*, (New York: Three River Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>389</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 2.

<sup>390</sup> St. Ignatius of Loyola, (1491-1556), soldier, priest, and founder of the Jesuit Order.

had both worked together since the beginning of the project of discovery and colonization of new lands around the world. While the Crown quest was the expansion into new territories and the appropriation of resources, the Church pursuit was focused on the education and evangelization of the inhabitants of that new world. In America, that partnership continued long after the foundation of the first Spanish colonial settlements. In the newly established urban centers in Spanish America, Christian devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints was as strong as in Spain. This is evident since even in remote, isolated Andean locations like Potosí, religion was an integral part of people's lives, judging by the many churches, monasteries, *cofradías* (brotherhood or sodalities), and religious orders that had settled there, proving that religion was a fundamental part of culture in colonial Potosí.

Those places where the *Potosinos* gathered to practice their faith were usually dedicated to the Virgin or to a saint who had been chosen as the *santo patrono* (patron saint) or protector, to whom people in the *Villa* would pray in times of trouble. In 1561, Potosí itself had chosen San Agustín as its patron saint. At the time, the city had been suffering the effects of diseases and drought for a couple of years and had tried to placate the ire of God by organizing *procesiones de sangre* (blood processions) in which the participants flagellated themselves with the intention of commemorating the sacrifice of Christ in the cross. A procession of this kind is described in the *Historia*, as taking place on Thursday, during Holy Week in 1685: "And, as this is a blood procession, many people, around 200 *disciplinantes*

[people who publicly flog themselves in this kind of event] joined the procession.”<sup>391</sup> As the suffering continued in the *Villa*, and the *Potosinos'* pleas to stop it had not been answered, they decided that it was necessary to designate a saint to watch over the city. By doing so, they would have a personal intercessor with whom they could develop a closer relation. The *Historia* covers the events related to this election of their patron saint, after which “with his intercession God took away the plague and it rained heavily.”<sup>392</sup>

*Potosinos* developed a close relationship with their patron saints and the Virgin Mary in her different denominations: Our Lady of Copacabana, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Virgin of the Vera Cruz among the most popular. People in the *Villa* attended church, participated in religious celebrations on important days such as Corpus Christi, and they also were involved in charitable works to help the poor and sick in the city. Bolivian historian Pablo Luis Quisbert, who has conducted extensive research on archives in Potosí about religious habits in colonial Perú, states that the notarial files of wills indicates that *Potosinos* often left either to family or to the parishes they attended cherished belongings that they used during religious celebrations or private prayers; among those artifacts images of the Virgin Mary, or clothes used in ceremonies. If the deceased were able to leave some money in their wills, some of the money usually would be bequeathed to their churches too. Quisbert indicates that looking into those wills offers a close view into how

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<sup>391</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 329.

<sup>392</sup> Arzáns, *Historia* I, 115-116.

*Potosinos* experienced piety and devotion, which saints they worshiped, which churches or *cofradías* they belonged to, and also the status of the deceased person, because people of all positions in society, not just elites, did this, adding that *Potosinos* were showing a real commitment to their faith even after death, a sincere concern about the salvation of their souls.<sup>393</sup> Quisbert also wrote about how death and salvation of the soul weighed heavily on the minds of the *Potosinos*, not only as a religious matter but also regarding the “reaffirmation of their souls.” He states that the provisions that Catholic individuals left in their wills regarding the details of the burials, the alms bequeathed, and the money left for masses given for their souls, those were all an indication of the social position of the deceased.<sup>394</sup> One of such provisions in the will of a rich merchant reads: “I order that a thousand masses will be celebrated for my soul, as arranged by the executor of my will, and I order that ten thousand pesos from my estate be given to the college of the Company of Jesus, where my body is to be buried. This sum will be utilized as the college’s priests see fit.<sup>395</sup>

The wealth flowing from the silver mines offered *Potosinos* access to all kinds of earthly delights but also contributed to their possible condemnation, the loss of their souls by engaging in vices --prostitution, gambling, and drinking-- and the

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<sup>393</sup> Pablo Luis Quisbert, “Servir a Dios o vivir en el siglo: La vivencia de la religiosidad en la ciudad de La Plata y la Villa Imperial (Siglos XVI y XVII).”, 299-301, Chapter in *La Construcción de lo Urbano en Potosí y La Plata (Siglos XVI y XVII)*, (Ministerio de Cultura de España: Sucre, 2008).

<sup>394</sup> Quisbert, “Servir a Dios,” 301.

<sup>395</sup> Quisbert, “Servir a Dios,” 300. Last will of Juan Cesar, natural de Genoa y vecino de La Plata. ABNB EP, 94a, La Plata, 22.V.1630, fs. 515r-521v.

complicated involvement, direct or indirect, in the abuse of the native population, mainly by forcing them to work in the mines. Not everybody owned mines, but practically everybody in the *Villa* benefited, profited, or earned a living --one way or another-- from the prosperity the mining business delivered. It must have been impossible not to witness the myriad of natives going up and down the *Cerro* every day, or looking at the squalor in which they lived in the *rancherías*, without feeling guilty. The source of wealth in Potosí came from the silver extracted from the mines, but the mines would not work at full capacity without native labor. The sin of greed surely weighted heavily in the minds of the *Potosinos* who faced the dilemma of behaving like good Christians and stop the exploitation of the native population, or not disturbing the status quo and keep enjoying the prosperity; the first option would have been unthinkable since not having forced labor in the mines would have resulted in the end of the *Villa* and the lifestyle it offered. It is reasonable to see how the *Potosinos'* religious anxiety would have caused them to constantly blame themselves for the bad things happening in the *Villa*, which in turn would have made them seek divine forgiveness.

During the plague pandemic that afflicted Potosí in 1719, the *Cabildo* (Town Council), together with merchants and other citizens, collected money that was given to the Jesuit priests to help in the care of the poor around the city and in its two hospitals, San Juan de Dios and Hospital de la Veracruz, tending to those who had been afflicted by the plague.<sup>396</sup> The *Cabildo* also ruled that doctors and

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<sup>396</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 9.

pharmacies should give attention and medicines, free of charge, to those unable to pay.<sup>397</sup> Men in Potosí, in particular those who were in charge of the good functioning of the city, members of the *Cabildo* for instance, or the wealthy and prominent in the community, all were being looked at by the rest of the residents, to see if they were performing their manly duties as expected. Those men had to perform their masculinity by following the precepts of the Catholic Church about charitable works and also behave according to what was expected from them as good citizens. The observance of their Christian duties in general, would be judged not in this world but once they were dead; on the other hand, their actions aiming to provide assistance to the people in Potosí who were being afflicted by natural disaster, would be judged immediately in the community. It was essential for prominent men to fulfill those expectations to keep their power and prominence in Potosí society.

### Calamity and Piety

Potosí was a single business town, where silver was the only resource and any kind of employment in the *Villa* was in the mining related business or in the service field; therefore, everybody's subsistence was contingent on silver production. When the production diminished, affecting *Potosinos'* livelihood, one way of responding to the difficult situation was to search for the cause of the problem and also for a solution. With so much violence, corruption, and dissipation running rampant in the *Villa*, blaming its inhabitants wicked ways for the ills of the

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<sup>397</sup> Kris Lane, *Pandemic in Potosí*, 61.

city was to be expected. Organizing processions, masses, *novenas*<sup>398</sup>, rosaries, and donations was one way of reacting to the misfortunes affecting the city. However, not all charitable donations were connected to the high or low yields of silver in the mines; many were given as an offering of thanksgiving and many other times as a way of boasting how wealthy and powerful the *Villa* and its dwellers were. Piety for the *Potosinos* was on display constantly, a sign of gratitude in good times, by parading the wealth they had accumulated, and, --during hard times-- to seek atonement for their sins and ask God to keep the *Cerro* producing large amounts of silver. At one point, Arzáns stated: "May the Lord allow the *Cerro* to keep being wealthy, as it is expected, and also much happiness to such devoted, charitable, liberal, illustrious, magnificent, and very loyal *Villa*, in service to the Crown."<sup>399</sup>

The decrease in silver production was certainly a calamitous event. Nevertheless, Potosí had also its share of natural disasters: floods, earthquakes, fires, and plagues; in all those circumstances too, the *Villa* reacted with religious acts of contrition such as public prayers, offerings, donations and alms, as a way to ask forgiveness for their sins that might have contributed to the divine punishment they were receiving and that involved anything that affected the normalcy in their

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<sup>398</sup> From the Latin *novem*, meaning 'nine'. It refers to prayers performed on nine consecutive days.

<sup>399</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 42. After reminiscing about the mixed happenings in the *Villa*, good and bad, the author offers this invocation to God, pleading for a continuance of His blessings.

lives.<sup>400</sup> “The Three Scourges of Potosí” deeply disrupted the life and the economy in the *Villa*. They were the *Vicuña Wars* (1622-1625),<sup>401</sup> the deadly flood that caused the break in the *Caricari* dam (1626), and the Mint fraud regarding the debasement of the silver coins minted in Potosí (1649). These three events caused tremendous physical and human losses and were considered by the people of the *Villa* to have happened because the sins of the city had enraged God, who sent those scourges as punishments. Hanke states that these three catastrophic events contributed to the decline of Potosí; so important were they for the *Potosinos* that, in fact, Arzáns originally considered “*Las Tres Destrucciones of Potosí*” as the title for the work he would later call *Historia*.<sup>402</sup>

In 1626, the rupture of the dams around the *Caricari* reservoir caused, in a matter of minutes, a major flood that destroyed everything in its path; mills, refineries, houses, and hundreds of lives were also lost. The response to this tragedy from the officials in the Potosí *Cabildo* was to assemble a religious

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<sup>400</sup> For historical accounts of Potosí’s floods, see *Historia*, I, 161, 163,383; II, 19, 20, 66, 123, 261, 285, 440, 489; III, 15, 34, 96. For accounts of earthquakes, see *Historia*, I, 185; II, 128, 178, 261, 338.

Potosí had several epidemic events such as smallpox in 1562 and 1589-90, and diphtheria, typhoid fever, and measles during the first quarter of the 1600s. The most devastating of these events happened in 1719 when a deadly plague caused more than twenty thousand casualties in the *Villa*. Kris Lane covers this plague in *Pandemic in Potosí, Fear, Loathing and Public Piety in a Colonial Mining Metropolis*.

<sup>401</sup> The *Vicuña Wars* are covered in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

<sup>402</sup> Lewis Hanke, “El Otro Tesoro de las Indias: Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsuá y Vela y su historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí”, 59. Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Alicante, 2016. Digital edition, from: *Actas del II Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas*, Nijmegen, Holanda, August, 1965, pp.51-72.

procession to “placate the ire of God and plead for mercy.”<sup>403</sup> The *Historia* description of this tragic event also echoes the belief in divine punishment for the *Potosinos’* wickedness: “Poor wretch Potosí, that at the height of your opulence, you collapsed miserably for not paying attention to the degradation your sins were causing.”<sup>404</sup> The Potosí flood was not a sweeping disaster as the deluge described in the Bible, however, it is not difficult to imagine how the people of the *Villa* surely must have seen it as the comeuppance they deserved for their transgressions. In a mining town, anything that disrupted the normal operations of the business would always be a disaster of Biblical proportions.

### Men Performing Piety

According to Natalia Núñez-Bargueño, Catholic masculinities and male devotional practices in urban spaces show that the performance of public piety together with the performance of masculinity was not easily done, mainly because there were often multiple and opposing ways of performing piety, according to place, time, and social frameworks. Accepted roles for Christian men had been often at odds with each other: the Catholic gentleman on one side, and the Crusader or pious soldier on the other, for instance. Following Judith Butler’s idea of gender as being constructed and performed, Núñez-Bargueño proposed that “urban and public

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<sup>403</sup> ABNB(Archivo y Biblioteca Nacional de Bolivia), CPLA(Cabildo Secular de Potosí), 15, ff.2-16. In Lane, *Potosí*, 124.

<sup>404</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 2. For a detailed account of the Caricari flood see *Historia*, II, 1-15. The Caricari was the biggest flood experienced in Potosí, however other inundations occurred; for those see: *Historia* I, 383; II, 261, 285, 489.

space, as well as religious ritual and the development of mass culture and new technologies, magnified the performative aspects of Catholic masculinity within the procession and other related religious mass events.”<sup>405</sup> Processions around a town or city have usually been a religious ceremony where men could perform piety and virility at the same time in the public sphere, outside the home, since traditionally, home and nature have always been associated with femininity.<sup>406</sup>

Although elite women in Spanish Colonial America were mostly responsible for philanthropy, aiding the poor and sick in their communities, we see that in Potosí men were also involved in charitable works; for them it was a way to display their benevolent side without compromising their virile masculinity. Men in the *Villa*, in particular those who were in charge of the administrative affairs in the city, members of the *Cabildo* for instance, or the wealthy and prominent in the community, all were being looked at by the rest of the population to see if they were performing their manly duties as expected. Men had to display their masculinity by following the precepts of the Catholic Church about charitable works and behaving as moral individuals. Therefore, it was necessary to fulfill those expectations not

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<sup>405</sup> Natalia Núñez-Bargueño, “Performing Catholic Masculinity in Early Twentieth-Century Spain: The International Eucharistic Congress of Madrid (1911)”, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 45, No.4, December 2021, pp. 559-581.

<sup>406</sup> Núñez-Bargueño, “Performing”, 563.

For additional works on Masculinity in the Reformation and Medieval times see: D. M. Hadley, Ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, (New York, Addison Wesley Longman, 1999); Scott H. Hendrix and Susan C. Karant Nunn, Eds., *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, (Missouri, Truman State University Press, 2008); Clare A. Lees, Ed., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Ruth Mazzo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

just to be good Christians, but also to keep their power and prominence in Potosí society. The *Historia* offers several examples of men in Potosí who were celebrated for their valor and honor, “caballeros” is the word used to describe them, and also for their generosity and acts of kindness towards those in need; Juan Urdinzu Arbeláez was one of them. He was a *Caballero de la Orden de Santiago* (a military and religious order of knights created at the beginning of the twelfth century) and *Alférez Real de la Villa* (a Spanish Royal Official). He reportedly distributed money among the poor to buy daily necessities and also was a benefactor of the Jesuits’ schools in the *Villa*.<sup>407</sup> “Good and bad can be found in this *Villa*: what would be of it if there are only the bad. With their evil deeds, the latter angered the divine justice; with the good ones, the former deserved its mercy.”<sup>408</sup>

The tragic story of Francisco Orozco, a resident of Potosí, exemplifies the impact that faith had on the life of a man. Francisco Orozco was a *hidalgo* (a man of the lower nobility in Spain), who in 1612 had been living in Potosí for a few years. Like many of his fellow Spaniards, Orozco went to Potosí attracted by the possibility of making a fortune in the silver business. He worked very hard but was unable to fulfill his aspirations. Feeling ill and burnt out, he was taken to the hospital where he had a nervous breakdown. He became despondent, and although he was a devoted Christian, he began shouting blasphemies, insulting Jesus and the saints, blaming them for his misfortune. During his emotional collapse he seemed to be

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<sup>407</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 314.

<sup>408</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 84.

talking to an invisible person in the room, continuously asking: “What do you want?” A priest was called, and he and other people in the room believed Orozco was possessed by the devil. When the priest tried to perform an exorcism, Orozco told him that the devil was not inside his body, the devil was at the top of his bed (he was referring to a crucifix). Orozco had abandoned his faith because Jesus had not helped him to earn the living he deserved as an *hidalgo*; instead, men who did not have his standing were getting rich. Orozco owed some money, and he feared his creditor was going to consider him an *infame* (a person without *fama*: reputation). Orozco was devastated because people would see him as a man who had committed a dishonorable act since he was unable to repay his debt. He said that he would rather go to hell than keep living in a kind of world where human honor was more important than the respect of God and faith. “I abhor Christ because he gives riches to worthless men and common folk, not to me, a *hidalgo*. I came to Perú because I was poor, with many debts, and also to earn money to give my daughter a dowry. Many people in Potosí worked less than I and now they are better off than me. But what bothers me the most is that I am going to lose my honor because I will not be able to repay a loan a man gave me based on trusting my word. This man is going to think I am not honorable, that I am an *infame*.”<sup>409</sup>

Several themes manifest in Orozco’s story. At first glance it appears to be a lesson on repentance and salvation; however, the account also emphasizes issues regarding: a) masculinity, specifically what it meant to be a man in colonial society

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<sup>409</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, I, 287.

in Potosí, and also how Orozco felt he had not fulfilled his responsibilities as the patriarch of his family; b) honor, the importance of reputation and standing in the community. Orozco was a noble man complaining that by not paying his debt he had turned into a man with no *fama*, even worse, he had lost his good reputation and became an *infame*; c) wealth, and its connection to the standing of a man in society. Orozco's good Christian ethics in relation to working hard and being a good father, did not seem enough to be regarded as a virtuous, virile man; therefore, he was ready to risk the eternal damnation of his soul. As a Spaniard, Orozco brought with him to Potosí the concept of honor and fame that men of his standing lived by in his home country. He was not the only one to do so; although adaptation to the new environment in America was essential for Spaniards to achieve success in their Conquest venture, they would nonetheless, never abandon the values that theoretically held their society together in Europe. Furthermore, they were firmly intent on replicating those values in America.

The reaction of Orozco to the series of events that precipitated his downfall was not a rarity among *Peninsulares* in the New World. Spanish men who came to the colonies to improve their circumstances looking for fame and fortune, faced natural and social environments that were different from those in Europe. Men, like Orozco had to endure harsh living conditions, separation from their families and customs; they also needed to conform to a different social system that challenged not just their status but everything that previously supported their masculinity. Violence was in many circumstances the behavior those men used to establish or

regain their masculinity. In Orozco's case, the violence is not aimed at other people, but it is in fact a self-inflicted assault since this man channels his hopelessness and misery inwards, destroying his own mind and soul. Orozco's tragic story was not unique, since not everybody was able to find fortune in Potosí; what it was unique was the fact that he was not like most of his fellow men in the city because he decided to take a different course of action when facing with impending doom. Orozco did not seek a change in his fate by asking God for forgiving of his sins -- whatever they must have been-- or participated in private or public devotional performances aimed to seeking help for his ills. Tragically, he knew that he would not be able to save his soul unless he behaved like a pious individual but, feeling abandoned and not respected, he rejected his faith and his Savior. No matter all his misfortunes in life, he managed to keep a high level of self-esteem and was going to die as the *hidalgo* he was, on his own terms.

### Public Piety

Potosí was certainly a city with much violence and conflict; its crooked streets and dark alleys, a unique a perfect stage where men performed the violent side of their masculinity. However, the city was also a place where men could show their religious zeal. When male *Potosinos* were involved in religious pursuits, the location where they would perform those activities would not have been the streets (other than in the occasion of processions), but mostly in the churches or other places related to religious worship such as the *cofradías*, where people could wear

their finest clothes and occupied the places their position in society assigned them. Masculinity was displayed in a different angle, attending church or *cofradías*, was not done to present themselves as roughly virile individuals. Instead, their manliness would be proven by the places of privilege they would occupy, literally in the seats inside the church, and figuratively in the positions they held in religious associations or festivities or the money they gave away as donations which would give them the right to precede others in religious or secular functions. Their religious masculinity was all about wealth and power, which would be on display on their clothes and jewelry. Catholic churches in Potosí created the perfect stages for men to publicly display their piety together with their wealth, at the same time they were enhancing their reputation as honorable members of the community.

Due to the enormous prosperity the mines provided, which enabled elite members of society to donate large sums of money, Catholic churches in the *Villa* followed the ostentatious display of affluence that the city had learned to enjoy. This was the Baroque Period, characterized precisely by ostentation in artistic expressions; except that regarding pageantry and splendor, Potosí was ahead of other urban centers in the Spanish colonies. The *Villa* was an extraordinarily rich city, spectacular in many ways, ready to show it to the world and, what would be a better time than when the Catholic Church was confronting the assault of the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic Church was intent on countering the Reformation offense, not just using articles of faith but also by ensuring that Roman Catholic churches were instruments of public displays of their power. Historian

Stephanie Merrim states that: “When reacting to the austerity of the Reformation, the Hispanic world fired back with spectacle and ostentation. The Spanish colonies in the New World produced the overblown wealth that brought those spectacular proclivities to a hyperbolic peak in statecraft, religion, architecture, consumerism, daily life, and so on.”<sup>410</sup> For example, Accarette du Biscay marvels at the richly decorated church --with donations made by prominent male citizens-- he found during his visit to Potosí in the mid-1600s, “The altar in the church of the *Recoletos* (Catholic religious order of priests), which was a station in the procession, was entirely furnished with statues, vases, and gold and silver plates, encrusted with pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones that I do not believe we will ever see such display of wealth.”<sup>411</sup>

At the time, wealthy Potosí was probably one of the richest cities in the world; money was not an issue, so it would have made sense to embrace the Baroque sensitivity and attend and support the most powerful church. The *Iglesia Mayor* in Potosí was simple and unassuming on the outside but extremely lavish in the inside, states Kris Lane.<sup>412</sup> The church was a testimony of the affluence with which the owners of the silver mines steadily supplied the *Villa*, and also of the use of such affluence inside a temple to support the concept of a powerful faith.

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<sup>410</sup> Stephanie Merrim, *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>411</sup> Accarette du Biscay, *Viajes*, 53.

<sup>412</sup> Lane, *Potosí*, 95.

In 1685 the *Villa* had an abundance of churches,<sup>413</sup> indigenous parishes, and *cofradías*.<sup>414</sup> Usually, a church housed one or more *cofradías*. Parishioners and *cofrades* (the members of the *cofradías*) participated in religious celebrations and contributed monetarily to sponsor the festivities, also providing alms to those down-and-out in the city. Often, members of a guild would also congregate in the same *cofradía*; for instance, merchants in the *Villa* were mostly members of the *cofradía de La Soledad*. *Cofradías* in colonial Spanish America were similar to those operating in Spain since they worked as all-purpose religious organizations, often created in already-functioning Catholic churches where their human and monetary resources were committed to organize *rogativas* (public prayers dedicated to God or a particular saint, pleading for help in the matter of a serious need of the community), rosaries, *novenarios* or *novenas* (worship that lasted for nine days, usually to pray for the soul of a deceased person), and processions where the *cofrades* were in charge of carrying the images from the altars and chapels in the church around the streets of the city. These brotherhoods also served an important function in society because they were in charge of collecting alms and distributing

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<sup>413</sup> Among major churches in the *Villa*: *La Iglesia Mayor, San Lorenzo, San Francisco, Nuestra Señora de Copacabana*.

<sup>414</sup> Among some *cofradías*: *Del Santísimo Sacramento, Del Cristo de la Vera Cruz, De las Benditas Almas, De la Misericordia, De Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu, De la Soledad*. There were also six convents of friars, two cloisters of nuns, un *recogimiento*, and the *Colegio de la Compañía de Jesús*.

For native parishes and *cofradías*, see Emma María Sordo, *Civilizational Designs: The Architecture of Colonialism in the Native Parishes of Potosí*, PhD Dissertation, University of Miami, 2000.

them among the needy.<sup>415</sup> In her investigation on confraternities and charity as precursor of modern welfare, Maureen Flynn states that the study of these religious organizations illustrates that “the purpose of joining confraternities was to exercise Christian piety, particularly charity, long heralded by medieval theologians as the most desirable of the cardinal virtues.”

However extravagant and sometime licentious life was in Potosí, devotion to the Catholic faith was an essential part of colonial culture. Attending church, being members of *cofradías*, participating in processions, contributing alms to the help of the needy in the city, all that signified the makings of an *hombre de bien*: a man of good reputation, with a strong sense of honor, brave, virtuous --in other words, *un buen Cristiano*-- who observed his obligations to care for those in need, even in difficult times. Arzáns alludes to this when he writes about how strongly devoted and generous the *Potosinos* were:

“This *cofradía* (*Cristo de la Vera Cruz*, in the church of *San Francisco*) is one of the biggest in the kingdom of Perú... which in better times used to collect large alms. However, the overwhelming devotion people have for this Divine Lord, still keeps generosity high.”<sup>416</sup>

Undoubtedly, there was a sincere feeling of fulfilling the duty of good Christians in the *Villa*, however, pious actions were sometimes performed as a way

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<sup>415</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 321-332.

<sup>416</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 323. This comment refers to 1685, a year when the output of the mines was in decline, affecting all aspects of daily life in Potosí. Arzáns wants to point out that even though the churches and *cofradías* had seen better days regarding donations, the devotion is still strong among *Potosinos*.

of flaunting how wealthy they were or what powerful positions they occupied in the city. Activities related to church ceremonies or festivities were a great opportunity to wear the fanciest clothes and jewels because, they could show how high in society they were when they attended church, and the rest of the people in the *Villa* were there to see them. Generous donations to the poor, or paying for the costs of festivals, etc. would also send a message indicating how rich they were. *Potosinos* were aware of how important their spectacular city was; they understood how much the Spanish Crown relied on the *Cerro* silver mines for their economic survival, and also that they should play a part in supporting the Church since it was closely related to the Crown.

The same way that contemporaneous people who lived or travelled to Potosí described the climate as unforgiving and the men as violent, those writers were also witness to the display of wealth in carrying out the celebrations of religious festivities and also how devout and generous givers of donations and alms the *Potosinos* were. For example, Fray Diego de Ocaña described the installation in 1601 of an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the church of San Francisco in the *Villa* and the ensuing festivities, including processions in which several *cofradías* participated. Ocaña described his amazement at the stunning spectacle of people and the display of wealth when the image of the Virgin arrived at the door of the *Iglesia Mayor*, where the procession congregated: “five *cofradías* of Spaniards, bringing five hundred large candles, in a display of magnificence, since the candles

were very expensive.”<sup>417</sup> Luis Capoche, an owner of mines and mills who lived in Potosí, writes in 1585: “The alms are more than magnificent as we can see that the priests of the *Compañía de Jesús* have built a house and a church in a short period of time.”<sup>418</sup> Bishop Reginaldo de Lizárraga also gives an account of his visit to Potosí in the late 1500s, expressing his awe at finding so many well-appointed *cofradías* in the *Villa* and how the *Potosinos* were engaged in devotional practices and charitable works: “Potosí has many *cofradías*; they are well furnished with wax for the celebrations. The *cofradía* of the Blessed Sacrament is the best furnished of them all. Potosí is a town where large alms are given. I was there during Lent, and a *cofrade* told me that during Holy Week, the amount of alms collected was very large. The way they perform the Blessed Sacrament processions is unbelievable.”<sup>419</sup>

Accarette du Biscay was also able to comment on one of the of grand fiestas that happened during his visit to Potosi in 1657; the occasion was the celebration of the birth of the Spanish Prince Felipe Próspero. Du Biscay wrote in his chronicle that the celebrations lasted fifteen days, during which time all work ceased in the city. He expresses amazement at how no expenses were spared, everything, --games, dances, music, comedies-- was done with great pomp. The last day of celebrations a procession took place between the *Iglesia Mayor* and the Church of the *Recoletos*, “where they took the Holy Sacrament accompanied by all the clergy and the people

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<sup>417</sup> de Ocaña, *Viaje por el Nuevo Mundo*, 235

<sup>418</sup> Capoche, *Relación*, 180.

<sup>419</sup> Reginaldo de Lizárraga, *Descripción breve de toda la tierra del Perú, Tucumán, Río de la Plata y Chile*. (Madrid: Atlas, 1968), 90-91.

of the *Villa*, who walked on streets that had been paved with silver bars... the altar of the *Recoletos* was adorned with precious jewels because the people of Potosí have taken their most valuable jewels to be displayed there.<sup>420</sup> On his visit to Potosí in the late 1500s, Mercedarian Friar Juan Martín de Murúa describes the *Iglesia Mayor* as: “of medium size, which should be expanded due to the large population in the *Villa*. However, it is decorated with pricey ornaments such as the silver lamp that burns in front of the Sacred Sacrament.” He continues with his praises of other chapels in the *Villa* -- Santa Ana, Las Ánimas, and San Crispín, also complimenting the convents.. Friar Murúa also described all these places of worship as offering “beautiful music and ornaments, famous preachers, dedicated priests, all of which provide good service and attend to the needs of the *Villa*.”<sup>421</sup>

Processions were usually done joyfully on special days of the religious calendar to celebrate and honor saints, the Virgin, etc., or more somberly to perform a collective attempt to ask for the forgiving of sins and divine intervention each time a devastating event fell upon the *Villa*. These public exhibitions were more than a show of devotion, they were also a carefully orchestrated appearance of who was who in the *Villa*. Members of the colonial government, merchants, mine and refinery owners, parishioners, members of the clergy, natives, all gathered on the streets of the *Villa*, wearing their finest attire and taking positions according to their

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<sup>420</sup> Accarette du Biscay, *Viajes*, 51.

<sup>421</sup> Fray Martín de Murúa, *Historia General del Perú*, (Lima: 1616), Libro III, Capítulos XXX & XXXI), read on-line at [biblioteca-antológica.org](http://biblioteca-antológica.org)

importance. In 1719 Potosí was under the combined assault of an outbreak of disease and a severe drought that affected daily life in the city and also the mining operations. The *Villa* as a whole took to the streets to beg their newly installed *santo patrono*, San Agustín, to put a stop to the suffering, gathering in a large procession that the *Historia* describes in full detail.

“April 28, 1719, in response to the devastation caused by the plague breakout, all the images of the patron saints were taken to the *Iglesia de Santo Domingo* and from there, on a procession, to the *Iglesia Mayor*. There, a *novenario* of invocation was made so those patrons saints would intervene before God for the mitigation of His harshness... On May 7, there was a most devout procession to all the churches and main streets. During these nine days the whole *Villa* participated. *Cabildo* members and the *Corregidor* also attended the prayer sessions, morning and afternoon, setting example, even when the weather was cold and harsh. They paid for the *novenarios*.<sup>422</sup>

### *Fiestas Barrocas*

After the successful journey of the Spanish navigators and the discovery of the New World --which added not just glory but enormous wealth to the Crown's coffers-- large commemorative celebrations became the norm, first in Spain and later in Spanish America. The purpose behind these festivals was to exalt, of course, the success achieved in the discovery and conquest, and also to use it as propaganda tools to publicly glorify the two forces that gained new territories and peoples: the Crown and the Church.<sup>423</sup>

“Large scale spectacles gave the authorities an opportunity

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<sup>422</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 84.

<sup>423</sup> Lisa Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth: The Festivals of Colonial South American Mining Towns*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016). For more on the subject of Colonial Latin America festivals see: Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity*, (University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Stephanie Merrim, *The Spectacular City: Mexico and Colonial Hispanic Literature Culture*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

to organize and orchestrate music, dance, mock jousts and battles, parades, processions, fireworks, lighting, painting, poetry, and monumental (ephemeral) architecture in an effort to put forth political and social concepts. More specifically, it gave them the means to articulate the rationale for their continued control and privileged position in colonial society. Through these celebrations of the senses, officials sought to persuade inhabitants to accept their definition of good governance."<sup>424</sup>

Another characteristic of baroque fiestas in Spanish Colonial America is the infusion of *criollo* attitudes that, although they were supporters of the Crown, they still were looking for recognition and respect from the *Peninsulares*. Social recognition was important, so the complex organization and design of the festivals gave the opportunity to the *criollo* population in Potosí to compete for important roles in the games, processions, etc. Games became more than just entertainment, as Quisbert explains about the two most popular ones that were played during these events. *Juegos de cañas* were an old medieval contest where the participants throw *cañas* (reeds) to each other as if they were spears, which had to be stopped by the shield they were wearing. *Sortijas* (rings) was another popular game in which the contestants --on horseback-- had to insert the tip of a spear in a ring that was hanging from a rope. These two games were considered "*caballeroscos*" --games that *caballeros* would play.<sup>425</sup> Festival games were not just to prove manly physical abilities; they were in fact elaborate competitions that required each participant to have the proper attire, horses, and had to be escorted by a group of several men, friends or relatives, who would help with the logistics of the games.

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<sup>424</sup> Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals*, 146.

<sup>425</sup> Quisbert, "*Servir a Dios*," 342.

The *Cabildo* (Town Hall) usually allocated funds to pay for the cost of these games. Sometimes, however, the cost was so high that the participants had to take care of the expenses; this certainly limited the participation to those men in the *Villa* who had the means to do it.<sup>426</sup> The participation of both the elite members and the government officials in the *Villa* was important to show that everybody was committed to the values that supported the monarchy and the Church and, for men to show the power each one in their field held, how rich they were.<sup>427</sup> Games also served as a “pretext to release existing tensions in the *Villa* regarding rivalries among different groups of men who were battling for power in the community. “*Las cañas se vuelven lanzas*” (the reeds become spears) was a popular Spanish saying at the time.”<sup>428</sup> The *peninsulares* were preoccupied with demonstrating the privileges and influence they had for being born in Spain; the *criollos* wanted to be regarded as equal, rightful citizens.

These festivals were designed to honor and celebrate important figures of the church or the Spanish royal family, by showing how the city was loyal and supportive of both institutions. However, male *Potosinos* were also using those spectacles to display their own prestige as good Christian men, since they were enormous productions where the men had to perform to exhibit their masculinity, wealth and their clout. Both *peninsulares* and *criollos* believed they were the prominent members of society in the *Villa*, They were not weak natives or rowdy

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<sup>426</sup> Quisbert, “*Servir a Dios*,” 343.

<sup>427</sup> Quisbert, “*Servir a Dios*,” 346.

<sup>428</sup> Quisbert, “*Servir a Dios*,” 344.

foreigners, fortune seekers, or mercenaries involved in riots in the *Villa*; they were civilized members of society, they had the money to show it, and they did it by contributing high sums to pay for the festivals, the games, feasts and by showing off everything that money could buy: expensive clothes and jewels, the best horses and carriages, etc.

The *Historia* is brimming with historical accounts of these festivals, which were used to celebrate both religious and secular events. Innumerable descriptions cover all aspects of the celebrations, the clothes and the jewels people wore, the huge cost of the meals, dances, games, etc. In 1658 the *Villa* gathered to celebrate the birth of the King's son, Prince Felipe Próspero. These festivities are covered in full detail in the *Historia*, describing how expensive and magnificent they were, specifying the different groups in the *Villa* that were participating --miners, *azogueros*, merchants-- and how much they were requested to contribute for specific aspects of the festivities such as games, provisions, bullfights, etc.: "these fiestas were truly royal; those who are very or moderately rich contributed with the exorbitant expenses."<sup>429</sup> In another passage, the lavish attire of one of the distinguished men in the *Villa*, a *caballero* by the name of Don Gabriel Paniagua, is described this way: "Nobody could take their eyes away from Don Gabriel Paniagua because of the way in which he presented himself, all covered in gold and precious stones, so much that it was almost impossible to see the expensive fabric in which all those glittering objects were inserted. Even his horse, black and vivacious, was

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<sup>429</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 187.

richly harnessed.”<sup>430</sup> Wealthy *Potosinos* wore expensive clothes and precious stones not as a fashion statement but as an assertion of their status in the community. This display did not go unnoticed to those who visited colonial Potosí as we can see in comments they introduced in their writings. For example, Luis Capoche stated that “the clothes and adornments of this city, are as grandiose and expensive as they were in Madrid.”<sup>431</sup> Accarette Du Biscay wrote that “people in Potosí are always very well dressed, with gold and silver embroideries, scarlet cloth or silk, and with an abundance of gold and silver lace.”<sup>432</sup>

Don Gabriel Paniagua is an example of how elite men in Potosí used the accessories of their attires as tools in the performance of their masculinity during public events either religious or secular. They understood that to be seen as manly individuals they had to look powerful and wealthy, with everything accompanying them --their horses and entourage-- also matching the importance of their position in society. High levels of money and success were equal to high levels of manliness. On the other hand, Don Cristóbal de Ortega as described by Arzáns, was simply an example of *un hombre de bien*. He was a councilman who had always carried himself as a *buen vecino* (good citizen) in the *Villa*; one who would use his income as a magistrate (and sometimes, his own money, which should have gone to his children for the common good in the city).<sup>433</sup> They were different men, making

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<sup>430</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 186, 187.

<sup>431</sup> Luis Capoche, *Relación*, 179.

<sup>432</sup> Accarette du Biscay, *Viajes*, 42.

<sup>433</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 66.

different choices in their approach to behave like a man; however, both were admired and remembered for successfully having achieved their goals in the quest for manliness. There are so many of such accounts in the *Historia* that they could be repetitive sometimes. Perhaps we should focus on the one that it is one of the most telling of these accounts, one in 1685 in which Potosí fiestas are described by artfully combining both the longing for the glorious past with the sense that those days are gone and, maybe, will never come back again.

“Tell me famous *Villa* of Potosí, what has happened to your former grandeur, wealth, and fun entertainment? What has happened to your scintillating festivals, games, jousts, tournaments, masquerades, plays, galas and valued prizes? What has happened to the bravery of your *criollos*, their gallantry, horses, and their adornments, and the expensive clothes they wore in the fiestas?... What has happened, oh exalted *Villa* to those amazing bars of silver which with great ostentation covered the floors of the altars, all the way from the Mint and Royal Treasury in the day of Corpus, and the silver cones that were used as candlesticks? What has happened to the huge dowries, millions, and hundreds of thousands, that young maidens took to their weddings? ... Everything is gone, everything is sadness and weariness, everything is cries and sighs.<sup>434</sup>

This account reveals what Arzáns, who is chronicling the rise and fall of his beloved hometown, reminisces about what he holds dear and what he regrets losing. It seems that “everything that is gone” were mostly material things, things that can be bought: clothes, jewels, paid entertainment, dowries. It seems that in a way, the most important measure of a man is not who he is but what he has. Indeed, in other historical accounts in the *Historia*, praises are given to certain men who are honorable and care most about spiritual not earthly endeavors. But, for a deeply

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<sup>434</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 322.

devout man as the author appears to be, his declaration of everything that was and is no longer in the city, certainly conveys the impression that spiritual aspirations or achievements are not as important as temporal ones. Of course, it is impossible to actually see what is inside a man's heart, and private performances of piety did not have witnesses, so we are mostly left with what men performed in public.

### The Visit of a Viceroy

Diego Morcillo Rubio de Auñón was appointed Archbishop of Charcas, Perú, in 1708; in 1716 he assumed the position of interim Viceroy of Perú. On his land journey to the port of Arica, where he would embark to Lima, he stopped to visit Potosí. Although his tenure as Viceroy was brief (less than two months), his visit to the *Villa* was an extraordinary event for the city and its surroundings.

The *Villa* was used to hosting elaborate festivals, however, Archbishop Morcillo was only the second Viceroy setting foot there; the first one had been Viceroy Toledo in the 1570s. The visit of Morcillo to Potosí, although not a religious festivity per se, was nevertheless a large scale celebration in which the boundaries between the spiritual and the secular realms would coexist; he was, after all, a representative of both the Crown and the Church. This momentous occasion was recorded on paper by Arzáns, who wrote extensively about it in the *Historia*,<sup>435</sup> and on canvas by Melchor Pérez de Olguín,<sup>436</sup> who painted *Entrance of Archbishop*

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<sup>435</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 42-53.

<sup>436</sup> Melchor Pérez de Holguín (1660-1732), one of the most famous painters of Colonial Bolivia. He lived most of his life in Potosí.

*Viceroy Morcillo in Potosí.* The following passage describes how wealthy miners celebrated the occasion, donned in their most lavish attire: “In the evening, the famous miners of the *Cerro* offered a splendid and costly masquerade that had no equal in recent times. They were able to organize it very quickly, which did not affect the spectacle of rich fabrics. French clothes, ornate brocades, expensive satins, and silks... the first one to appear was Andrés de la Torre Montellano, main magistrate for the mines, wearing expensive clothes, riding a lavishly ornate horse, and escorted by twenty pages with axes and luxurious liveries.”<sup>437</sup> Fray Juan de la Torre, who accompanied Morcillo in his journey, wrote the official account of the trip in *Aclamación festiva de la muy noble Villa Imperial de Potosí*, published in Lima in 1716.<sup>438</sup>

The welcoming of Viceroy Morcillo, the highest official in the colony, the person who was embodying the presence of the Spanish king, is an illustration of how these kinds of crowded, opulent festivals exhibited the grandeur of a city bursting with pride and affluence. The eight-day long celebration of the visit describes the dignitaries dressed in splendid clothes, wearing the jewels of their

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<sup>437</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, II, 49

<sup>438</sup> Juan de la Torre, *Aclamación festiva de la muy noble imperial villa de Potosí en la dignísima promoción del Excmo. señor maestro fray Diego Morcillo, Rubio y Auñón, obispo de Nicaragua y de La Paz, arzobispo de las Charcas, al gobierno de estos reynos del Perú, por su virrey, y capitán general, y relación de su viage para la ciudad de Lima.* (Lima: Francisco Sobrino, 1716). This is a short --32 pages-- account of the visit of Morcillo to Potosí. It describes the opulence and pride the *Villa* displayed. Several times de la Torre mentions the prominent role the *Gremio de Azogueros* had in this event, which leaves no doubt that the mine and refineries owners played leadership roles in the *Villa*. The *Aclamación* is available on-line in [archive.org](http://archive.org).

offices, as well as the streets and balconies around the city were decorated with paintings and the finest draperies made of exquisite fabrics. Even the graceful women of the *Villa* were adding to the spectacle, also flaunting their elegant dresses and costly jewelry. The extravagant affair surpassed any other ever seen in the city:

“Once the music stopped, the celebrated *Cabildo* (who had taken care of the high cost of this event) presented His Excellency with a handsomely adorned Chilean horse, with stirrups and horseshoes made of fine silver. He rode the horse, accompanied by the *Cabildo* doyen and the royal ensign at the stirrups, and the *regidores* at the reins (all of them dressed in the courtly style with jewelry and gold chains, and the eminent members donned in elegant clothes) handling the staffs and the canopy. His Excellency began his journey through the streets, beautiful women were on the balconies and windows; never before was it seen so many distinguished matrons, so many honest maidens, so many distinguished ladies: all of them dashing and lavishly adorned, so many jewels, so many precious stones, so many pearls.<sup>439</sup>

It was also the perfect occasion for prominent men in the *Villa*, members of the *Cabildo* and other government officials, to perform their privilege of preferential seating in public functions, church services, and festive parades, where they held the right to be placed in the front rows. These prominent spaces were not just for honoring the officials but also for the rest of the people to know who they were.<sup>440</sup> Celebrations such as the visit of Morcillo created the perfect circumstances for men in Potosí to display their masculinity by associating it with power and status. The extravagance displayed during the visit of Viceroy Morcillo was not a one-time example of the performance of masculine piety in the *Villa*. Potosinos displayed

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<sup>439</sup> Arzáns, *Historia*, III, 48.

<sup>440</sup> Eugenia Bridikhina, “Los Misterios de la Urbe: Enredos Políticos y Económicos en La Plata y Potosí”, Chapter in *La Construcción de lo Urbano*, 247-248. These privileges for preferential seating were sanctioned by Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in 1573.

their opulence and power on a daily basis and were ready to fight for their positions in society in a constant basis.

Early Modern Europe exhibited multiple patterns of masculinity and men did not all perform the same kind of masculinity; masculinity was fluid, changeable, and socially constructed, therefore not easy to define. Masculine roles were adjusted to conform to the context of particular societal norms. However, certain characteristics were considered intrinsic to male behavior. To be a man meant to display virility and strength; as important as it was to have those qualities, it was equally necessary to exhibit them in public, mostly in front of other men. This performance of masculine piety was crucial to keep the status an individual enjoyed in the community of other men.

Violence was an essential component of the performance of masculinity in Potosí, piety and devotion another. The culture of the time indicated that men should display their virility and also their piety. Men in Potosí successfully walked the fine line between effecting respectable religious demeanor and performing traditional gender roles. They were not just moved by their devotion but also by the need to use their religiosity and charity to showcase their status. Churches, *cofradías*, processions, and festivals, were places where they could flaunt their power and wealth.

## CONCLUSION

“This city is what it is because our citizens are what they are”  
Plato

When silver was discovered overnight in the *Cerro* in 1545, Potosí became a colonial boomtown, with all that definition entails: fast growth, precarious dwellings, large and diverse population, vice and crime. What began as a hard to reach, isolated temporary settlement in the Andes --temporary because like in any other mining town, nobody knew for sure how long the mines would keep delivering silver-- grew into a city. As long the output of the metal was steadily high, people kept arriving in large numbers. This caused the *Villa* to become crowded mostly with men of different cultures and ethnicities, and non-traditional occupations: mercenaries, opportunists, fortune-hunters, etc. All these factors made coexistence strained and often violent.

The objective of this dissertation has been to examine the performance of masculinity in colonial Potosí by investigating male behavior in regard to violence, religious devotion and, gender relations. The analysis of historical accounts in Arzáns' authoritative study, *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, together with several contemporaneous chronicles, have been the leading sources for research. The testimony found on those works has been an invaluable source for the development of this project, since they constitute first hand observations of individuals that either lived in the *Villa* or were visitors to the city.

The history of the *Villa Imperial de Potosí* excited the minds of contemporary chroniclers and travelers who wrote about the marvels of this remote boomtown in the Andes. Those who visited and wrote about colonial Potosí, did it mostly to describe all that was novel, to their European outlook on the New World: flora, fauna, customs, and, in the particular case of Potosí, they could not ignore the bleak geographical environment that shocked them for its harshness, and the enormous amount of wealth circulating in the *Villa*. They also commented on how the wealth created by silver was behind the splendidly appointed churches and all the luxuries that the *Potosinos* were able to enjoy. Likewise, they were also shocked by the violence and the religious devotion that existed side by side in the *Villa*.

This analysis of the nature of the masculinity performed by Spanish and *Criollo* men in the *Villa*, aims to ascertain if that performance was influenced by the peculiar circumstances surrounding Potosí: isolation, large population, immense wealth. The results of my investigation demonstrate the accuracy of my thesis since the peculiar environment of Potosí created a unique microcosm in which negative traits --extreme violence, for instance-- were exacerbated, allowing for the construction of a type of hypermasculinity.

Arzáns' *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* takes central space in my investigation because it is the most extensive, comprehensive, and detailed document on two hundred years of history in colonial Potosí. The works of many other contemporary chronicles and travelers to *Potosí* have been also included in my investigation; however, the *Historia* is the most compelling work for that

location and timespan since it centers in Potosí and the *Potosinos'* everyday life. Conversely, the other writers have mainly focused on things related to the silver: mines output, labor, etc. and, little emphasis was placed on the everyday life of the people in Potosí, except for their comments on the environment, wealth and violence. That centering on everything related to the silver was understandable since the mines of Potosí were producing the highest level of silver in the world at the time they financed the Spanish crown projects, and offered the possibility of access to immense wealth to those brave enough to bear all the hardships surrounding Potosí.

The *Villa Imperial*, which was born rapidly following the silver discovery, was in many ways similar to other boomtowns in Latin America and the United States. Since its beginning, it was a place that was built and functioned on contrasting qualities of violence and piety. Potosí became a city of contrasts, a global phenomenon, known around the world. It was an outlandish, unique place that also created a unique and particular kind of men and masculinity. Covering a small area of a 2.6 miles circumference, Potosí was nevertheless a crowded, not well planned town where crime and vices thrived. The harsh environment did not invite the settlement in the area; therefore, the *Villa* became a magnet for a transient population. In other colonial towns in Spanish America, people worked the land, raised cattle, made their own clothes, prepared their own food; this was not the case in Potosí where the only occupation would be connected to the silver mines. However, the markets in the *Villa* offered all the products the *Potosinos* would need

in their daily lives --food, clothing, etc--and almost every luxury they could think of such as tapestries, crystal, linens, etc. which would come from every corner of the world. Potosí miners and merchants could afford those luxuries since they had become extremely wealthy thanks to the silver.

As compared to what was happening in other Spanish colonial societies in America, men in Potosí developed a more violent masculinity and their performance of masculinity was more ritualistic and ceremonial. They traveled to Potosí mostly without their families, with the single intention of getting rich. However, those men who were married, showed in their private lives as husbands and fathers that they were acting in accordance with the Spanish traditional practices of a patriarchal society: arranged marriages and control of the females in their households in order to protect the family honor.

The *Villa's* large population and the enormous wealth which those coming to Potosí were chasing, influenced --together with the remoteness of its location and its barren surroundings-- the development of a different kind of violent masculinity. My analysis of masculinity during the period, and the performance of masculinity in the *Villa*, shows how it was shaped by the effect of the conquest and, the particular circumstances of Potosí which distinguished it from other colonial towns in colonial Perú, even other mining locations such as *Porco* and *Huancavelica* which, although they were also mining towns, they did not display Potosí's peculiarities. In fact, it was precisely Potosí's distinctiveness, together with the compliance with the code of honor which altogether gave rise to a more violent masculinity. Masculinity

in Potosí was one-of-a-kind, just as the city itself was distinctive and unparalleled. Research findings indicate that violence was intrinsic and pervasive in Potosí society and that it was rooted in the long-lasting effect of the conquest campaigns, the fierce search for a share of the wealth pouring from the silver mines, the isolation from other large and established colonial population centers, the lack of an efficient system of law and order and, the adherence to the code of honor which shaped men attitudes and responses to real or alleged offenses.

Idle, armed men roamed the streets of the *Villa* engaging in brawls nearly on a daily basis. Nasty clashes would erupt spontaneously at the merest appearance of an offense or provocation; those encounters often ended with large casualties. In addition, the internal conflicts in the *Villa* regarding issues of power or money bred antagonisms among different sectors of the population, setting the stage for a civil war that lasted for three years. Persistent violence, either interpersonal or collective, affected everybody living in Potosí because it caused not just many deaths but also a continuous disruption of the normal day-to-day life.

Aggressive hypermasculinity was one of the main characteristics of the performance of masculinity in Potosí. Endless street brawls and larger warlike encounters around the city during the course of the *Vicuña Wars*, and the violence men display in those situations, was a recurrent matter in the above mentioned chronicles. Visitors to Potosí described the outrageous behavior of the *Potosinos* as something they had never witnessed before. The population in the *Villa*, in contrast

to other colonial Spanish settlements, was mostly composed by single, unoccupied men, the infamous *soldados* and *vagabundos*, who had made it their temporary home because they only interested in seeking a share of the riches from the mines. Once that was attained, they did not plan to settle down there. Also, the *Villa's* atmosphere of lax morality and lawlessness was suitable for their purposes.

The other marked and contrasting characteristic of men in Potosí was their performance of piety and devotion. My investigation reveals that piety was manly represented not just as the external manifestation of Christian spirituality --mostly tied to the notion of sin and punishment--but also how it is constructed to enhance status and power in society. The Baroque period was conducive to the imaged display of the Christian faith as a signifier of prosperity and prestige. The abundance of wealth in the *Villa* allowed for religious ceremonies to be carried out in churches overflowing with silver and gold and in churchgoers who attended the religious functions donned in lavish attire and jewelry as a statement which intended to state that the power and prosperity they were showing was related to being the followers of the true faith. Religious and secular celebrations were financially supported by generous donations of rich mine owners and merchants in the *Villa*. Those events were impressive, even when the glorious days of Potosí were in the past; they were also designed to celebrate the *Potosinos* themselves and their spectacular *Villa Imperial*, declaring that the memorable past was still shiny in the present. Piety and devotion were another way for *Potosinos* to display their

masculinity. Instead of exhibiting their virility, not in physical fights on the streets of the *Villa*, instead it would be parading it in church ceremonies and processions. These events would also allow men to put on display their Christian qualities.

In summary, despite the constraints and limitations imposed by the Covid epidemic, which restricted the access to archives in Bolivia, I demonstrate how the uniqueness and contradictions of colonial Potosí were the reason of the also unique and contradictory kind of masculinity displayed by the *Potosinos*; this study intended to examine those peculiarities. The results of my research suggest that it was precisely the factors -- isolation, harsh environment, large population and, enormous wealth-- behind Potosí's uniqueness which contributed to an also peculiar performance of masculinity that was not observed in other cities in Spanish America. I am confident my research represents a needed addition to the scholarship on the field of Colonial Latin American history, particularly regarding studies on men and masculinity in Spanish American colonies. With an abundance of documents still awaiting to be classified and researched in Bolivian archives, it would be left to future scholars to carry out more investigations on the subject of this dissertation. Potosí was a marvel in colonial times and still is in the minds of today's historians who intend to better comprehend the colonial past in the Americas.

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