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Pardos in Vallegrande: An Exploration of the Role of Afromestizos in the Foundation of
Vallegrande, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies (History)

by

Nathan Weaver Olson

Committee in Charge:

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Chair
Professor Nancy Postero
Professor Eric Van Young

2010

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010

DEDICATION

For Kimberly, who lived it.

EPIGRAPH

The descent beckons
 As the ascent beckoned.
 Memory is a kind
of accomplishment,
 a sort of renewal
 even
an initiation, since the spaces it opens are new places
 inhabited by hordes
 heretofore unrealized ...

William Carlos Williams

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Pardos in Vallegrande: An Exploration of the Role of Afromestizos in the Foundation of Vallegrande, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

by

Nathan Weaver Olson

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (History)

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Chair

The story of the foundation and settlement of Vallegrande, a region on the western edge of the department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, has varied considerably over the years. In one account from the 1780s, the region and its central city were founded by runaway slaves, in another, developed between the 1920s and 1950s, noble Spaniards and

their descendants conquered and settled the region. This study examines both narratives and how they came to be constructed, but it also returns to available primary and secondary sources to explore the role of Africans and their descendants in the conquest and settlement of Vallegrande. The study concludes that colonial officials did consistently categorize a large proportion of Vallegrande's population according to one of the mixed African and European and/or indigenous, or *afromestizo*, race categories in the colonial racial hierarchy or *sistema de castas* over many years. However, the study also uses parish baptismal records to demonstrate the shifting meaning and uncertain reliability of the racial categories employed by parish priests in late colonial Vallegrande, particularly in regards to the *afromestizo* race category *pardo*. Beginning in at least the late seventeenth century and continuing into the first third of the nineteenth century, the *pardo* category evolved to become the most flexible of all race categories in Vallegrande, eventually subsuming the *casta* term *mestizo*. These findings challenge both those who contend that Vallegrande was principally settled by Africans, and others who attempt to erase the contributions of Africans and their descendants from Vallegrande's historical record.

Introduction: Viedma and Vallegrande

In 1788¹, Francisco de Viedma, the head of a Spanish colonial administrative district called the intendency of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a region that encompassed much of the eastern half of what is now the Republic of Bolivia, finished a report to his superiors in the viceregal capital of Buenos Aires in which he described the economic potential, geographical characteristics, urban development, and racial demography of the intendency's populace. In his account of the city and region of Vallegrande, located eighty leagues² away from the intendency's capital, Cochabamba, he made the following observation:

It is impossible to discover how and at what time the conquest and peopling of these valleys occurred, because neither the archives nor the parish have any documentation to explain it; there is only a local tradition that the first residents were known by the name of Caballeros Pardos [pardo gentlemen or knights]. If this is so, perhaps these colonists were made up of slaves who had escaped from the many Spanish haciendas in the old corregimiento, now the partido of Mizque, to free themselves from the weariness and exposure of those cruel places. But this is all pure speculation.³ (Translation mine)

Viedma's observations about the visibility of the *curato*'s mulatto (technically mixed African and European ancestry) population were supported to some extent by his own summary of the town's racial demography. Out of a total of 8,373 persons, 3,215, or 38 percent of the population, were described as mulatto in his report to the viceroyalty

¹ The year is often reported as 1793. See Brooke Larson, *Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonial Transformation in Bolivia*, 174, note 8. Here Larson cites Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz's discovery of some of Viedma's correspondence in which he alludes to finishing his report in 1788. The intendency is also sometimes referred to as the intendency of Cochabamba.

² Depending upon the Spanish league used (the *legua legal* or the *legua común*) a distance of between 209 and 277 miles. The *legua legal* appears to have been the most common. Chardon, 137-138, Table 144.

³ Viedma, 104.

(See Chart 1⁴) It was the largest single racial group in the curato. Individuals described as mulattos lived in nearly every part of the provincia, but none of these communities had a mulatto population as large as Vallegrande's. In fact, the data in Viedma's report suggests that Vallegrande had one of the largest communities of *afromestizos*, persons of mixed African and white or indigenous ancestry, of any community in Charcas (Bolivia's colonial title) at the time.⁵ (See Map 1)

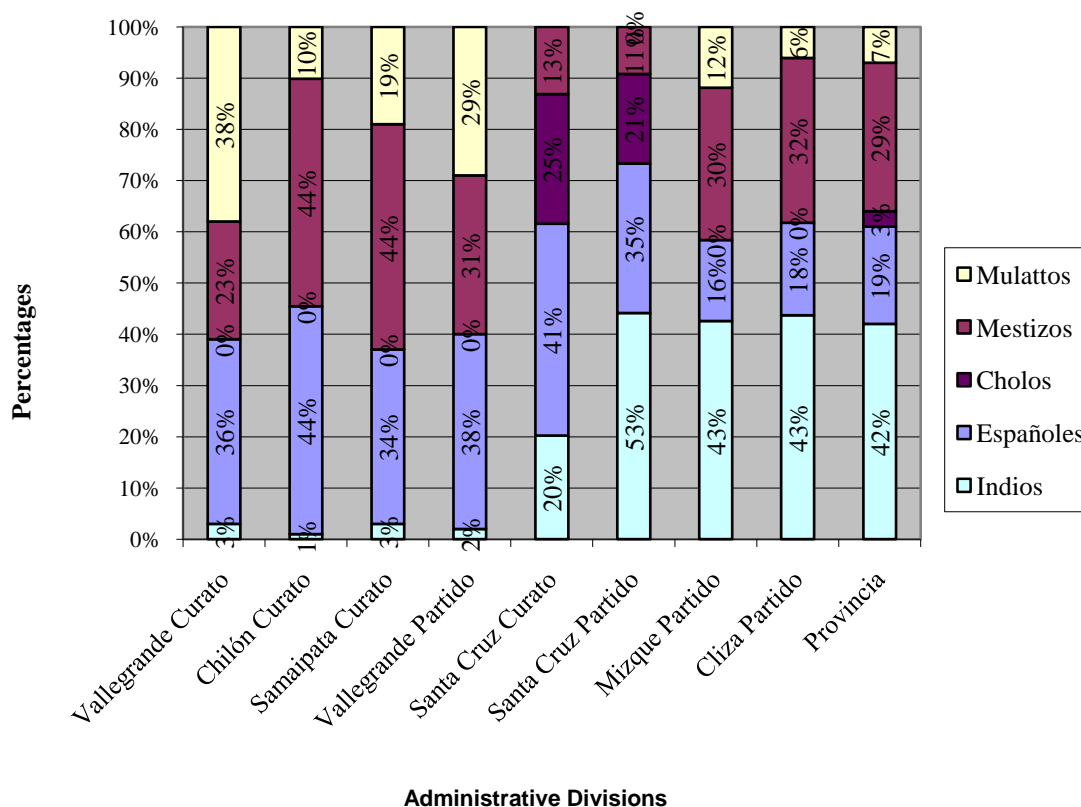
Beginning in the early twentieth century, Vallegrandino historians began to contest both Viedma's version of Vallegrande's foundation narrative, and the racial demography he suggested in his report. Instead, they offered their own version of the story and its principal actors. In it, the conquest and settlement of Vallegrande was authorized in 1612 by the Spanish viceroy in Peru, don Juan de Mendoza y Luna, the Marqués of Montesclaros, and carried out by Spaniards or their American-born children under the leadership of a Spanish conquistador, Captain don Pedro Lucio Escalante y Mendoza. In exchange for their settlement efforts, the founders were ennobled by the crown, a mark both of their faithful service and purity of blood. Soon the young

⁴ In Chart 1, the numbers are broken down first into *curatos*, the smallest administrative division (based upon ecclesiastical terminology: the area managed by a priest), then *partidos*, combining several *curatos*, and finally the *provincia*, in this case the Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The *curatos* of Vallegrande, Chilón, and Samaipata are included within the partido of Vallegrande; Vallegrande is then compared to other partidos. Note: For the sake of simplicity, I have excluded the category *negro* from this chart because it never exceeds 1 percent in any curato. The curato of Vallegrande had 28 negros, and the partido of Vallegrande had 40 negros. Neighboring Santa Cruz had no mulattos at all, but Viedma listed 150 negros there. Thus, Vallegrande appears to be the epicenter of the mulatto/pardo community in the region. Viedma, 85, 104-106, 121. Larson, Table 13: 175.

⁵ Viedma, 46, 90. In Alberto Crespo's book, *Esclavos Negros in Bolivia*, he estimates that at some point during the colonial era, Africans and their descendants may have constituted as much as twelve percent of the total population of the Charcas, far short of Vallegrande's proportion of *Afromestizos*. In 1787, pardos constituted about 12 percent of the partido of Mizque's population of almost 19,000 according to Viedma, pages 90-98. In 1793, the French naturalist, Alcides d'Orbigny, estimated that in Mizque, out of a population of 17,000, negros and mulattos totalled 2,249 persons, or 13 percent of the population, substantiating Viedma's figures for the partido. Crespo, 34.

settlement, threatened by attacks from an indigenous group known as the Chiriguano⁶, was ordered by the viceroy to retreat to a more secure district. Instead, in an open meeting of the town council or *cabildo*, the settlers decided to stay and fight, eventually defeating their violent enemy. The victorious founders then went on to settle the region.

Chart 1: Race Categories in Viedma's 1788 Report on the Santa Cruz Intendencia by Curato, Partido and Provincia



⁶ *Chiriguano* is often seen today as a perjorative term for the Guaraní, perhaps based upon the idea that word originally carried the meaning that is suggested when the word is seen as being of Quechua origin, combining the words *chiri* (cold) and *guano* (dung). Saignes suggests that the word is actually of Guaraní origin, originally *chiriones* (mestizos), the children of unions between the Guaraní and women from other indigenous groups. Saignes, 23.



Map 1: The Audiencia of Charcas. Source: Beltrán, 31.

One of the goals of this study is to explore these stories as representations, to better understand the individuals who created them, and the social and historical contexts in which they were created. In *The Politics of Memory*, Joanne Rappaport states that, for the storyteller: “The past is only useful insofar as it sheds meaning on the problems of the

present.”⁷ As instances of ‘social memory’, the two accounts above are very different projects that respond to very different problems. Viedma’s version purports to retell a local story, but it reinscribes the fugitive African slave upon the Vallegrandino, simplifying and essentializing a more racially and socially complex society.⁸ They are sympathetic, but unauthorized actors. Viedma’s version arose out of the need to make legible the historical origins of the regions under his charge, while his census categories reflected the fiscal and social concerns of the Bourbon state. The Vallegrandino version turns Viedma’s account on its head: here the founders of Vallegrande are noble Spaniards or their American-born descendants (*criollos*) fully authorized by the state to expand state boundaries. It is a reactive response generated by Vallegrande’s intellectual community, and produced in an atmosphere of emergent regionalism and a sense of nostalgia for a distant and heroic past. These two stories leave the reader with two representations: one based on faith in demographic data and a very particular social order, and the other on a careful framing of archival sources to suit a different sense of social order. Both are constructions built to suit the ends of those who framed them, versions of reality from which many actors are excluded or out of focus. As representations, both versions contain useful and potentially verifiable information, but also leave out information that might yield a somewhat different version of the truth.

⁷ Rappaport, 70.

⁸ This is a reference to Thomas Abercrombie’s discussion of the Spanish response to a complex Andean indigenous world. He says, “The imbalance of power in the discourse of colonialism, which authorized Spaniards and de-authorized Indians, always read the Indian back into the Andean, and did so most insistently to the most cross-culturally eloquent Andeans; Abercrombie defines “social memory” as “the embodied ways by which people constitute themselves and their social formations in communicative actions and interaction, making themselves by making rather than inheriting their pasts.” Abercrombie, 21, 213.

Another goal of this study is to fit the two versions of Vallegrande's foundation story together: maintain the characters identified over the course of recent Vallegrandino scholarship, but explore whether or not Africans or afroestizos had some role in the foundation of Vallegrande, as Viedma suggested they did. Putting the two foundation stories in conversation with each other in this way raises several questions: Were there afroestizos in Vallegrande? Where did they come from? Why were there so many? In short, it is a study that goes looking for afroestizos in Vallegrande. Although the resulting narrative may be itself a representation, it is an approach that sheds light on an important group of social actors: Africans and their descendants in Bolivian history are often hidden subjects, subsumed into a discourse between indigeneity on one end and whiteness on the other. This discourse is largely the end result of efforts by Bolivian intellectuals and politicians to create a new national subject in the years following the independence wars, a modern and more seemingly civilized subject who would be a more appropriate citizen for the new nation than the large indigenous and ethnically mixed populations these political elites inherited at independence. These "whitening" projects, both in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America during the nineteenth century, used official documents, like national censuses, as well as historical scholarship and literature, to remake the nation's racial landscape. One result of this process was the elevation of the *mestizo*, people of mixed race without particularly African features, to the status of citizen. The afroestizo subject was not treated in this way: while Bolivia's indigenous community was rejected by this new narrative, the afroestizo was erased.⁹

⁹ As José María Dalence noted in the 1846 census: "I will not take time to present the relationship of morenos to the general population because their number is insignificant. What few there are, together with their mixed descendents, come to 27,941, of which only 1,391 are slaves. They are barely noticed within

As a study that investigates the role of *afromestizos* in the foundation of Vallegrande, it will also explore the evidence Viedma uses to support his claims, beginning with his story of the *caballeros pardos* and ending with the late eighteenth century demographic data that appears to inspire his interpretation. This section is meant to address another set of questions: Were *pardos* and *caballeros pardos* the same thing? Was *pardo* meant as a reference to race? Was *pardo* understood to signify a person of African descent? The answers require the analysis of very different sorts of documents: from sixteenth century urban planning documents and bishop's reports to parish record data and censuses of the indigenous population, called *padrones de indios*. The result is the third goal of this study, a discussion of the complex ways that *calidad* and *clase* intersect and influence one another.¹⁰

The first chapter of this study explores the context in which the two representations were created, and introduces the principal storytellers involved. The second and third chapters will reframe the foundation story told by Vallegrandino historians and include some of these new actors, particularly *afromestizos*. It will also discuss the geopolitical colonial world that shaped the circumstances of Vallegrande's

the rest of the population. But I will not fail to mention that the mix of the native with the black produces the *sambo*, a brave race, daring, intellectual and very musically adept, possessing a sensitive musical ear, but with a reputation for treachery. The mix of white and black produces the *mulato*, which is only distinguished from the other by occasional facial features, being in every other way similar, which is to say in color, activity and intellectual capacity, both moral and physical. The children of the white and the Indian are in every way identical to their father, however they tend to be a bit *trigueño* (light brown in color) and demonstrate a few lingering characteristics of their mother. Bolivia owes its political independence to them." (My translation). Dalence, 206.

¹⁰ According to Robert McCaa, in "*Calidad, Clase, and Marriage in Colonial Mexico: The Case of Parral, 1788-90*": "*Calidad*, typically expressed in racial terms (e.g., *indio*, *mestizos*, *español*), in many instances was an inclusive impression reflecting one's reputation as a whole. Color, occupation, and wealthy might influence one's *calidad*, as did purity of blood, honor, integrity, and even place of origin. *Clase*, on the other hand, in its classical sense referred to occupational standing but included dimensions of wealth and race." McCaa, 477-478.

foundation as a Spanish settlement. The fourth chapter will take up the problematic term *pardo* mentioned by Viedma, and explore its relevance as a racial or descriptive category at the time of his visit to Vallegrande in the 1780s.

My approach to the problems suggested above, and the time periods and methods I use to address these problems, introduce a few distortions of their own. Vallegrandinos and Cruceños alike will notice that this study has little to say about the close relationship between the Vallegrande region and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Instead they are likely to feel that this study foregrounds Vallegrande's connections to Charcas at the expense of its traditionally tight relationship with Santa Cruz. This distortion is largely due to several factors. First, the study's focus on the foundation of Vallegrande, but not upon its later economic and cultural development, puts a great deal of emphasis upon the initial expedition, whose members appear to have set out from the city of La Plata and the neighboring settlements in and around Tomina. The expedition members and their leader, *maese de campo* don Pedro Lucio Escalante y Mendoza, were obliged to negotiate extensively with the leadership of Charcas, located in the city of La Plata, and with the distant viceroyalty of Peru, headquartered in Lima, to maintain their status as an authorized settlement. Had this study focused upon Vallegrande's later development, it would have demonstrated the early presence of settlers from Santa Cruz, (notably don Gonzalo de Soliz Holguín, who owned extensive properties near the settlement that later become known as Comarapa¹¹), and the high rate of intermarriage between Vallegrandinos and Cruceños. It is also clear that some members of the initial expedition came, not from Charcas, but from the same Spanish/Guaraní settler stock that initially

¹¹ Sanabria Fernández, *Gobernadores de Santa Cruz*, 69-70.

settled Santa Cruz de la Sierra—families from the Paraguayan settlement of Asunción.¹² The resulting mix of settlers in Vallegrande echoed the region's intended function as a settlement meant to better link the highland and lowland segments of colonial Charcas. The second factor is that this study's examination of race in Vallegrande during the late colonial period, and local scholarship during the early twentieth century, focus entirely upon processes and discussions happening largely within Vallegrande, eliding the many ways in which the region was closely articulated with the eastern lowlands. The resulting distortion is not an attempt to downplay Vallegrande's connection to the lowlands, but is a casualty of the particular kind of narrative this study attempts to present.

This study is also not meant to be a complete history of Vallegrande and its people, but an investigation of the presence of *afromestizos* within that history. The intent of this study is not to perpetuate the version of the story in which Vallegrande was founded by blacks, nor to suggest that *afromestizos* in Vallegrande dominated civic life. Instead, I hope that this study will restore *afromestizos* to a narrative from which they have been largely erased. Although terms used to refer to *afromestizos* in this study, such as *pardo*, *mulato*, and sometimes *cuarterón* were meant to denote a person of African descent, all were persons of mixed ancestry, possessing an extensive indigenous and European heritage in addition to African ancestors. Thus, the history of Vallegrande's *afromestizo* community is also a window into Vallegrande's socially complex environment.

¹² Peña et al, 20, 23.

Chapter 1: Representations of the Past

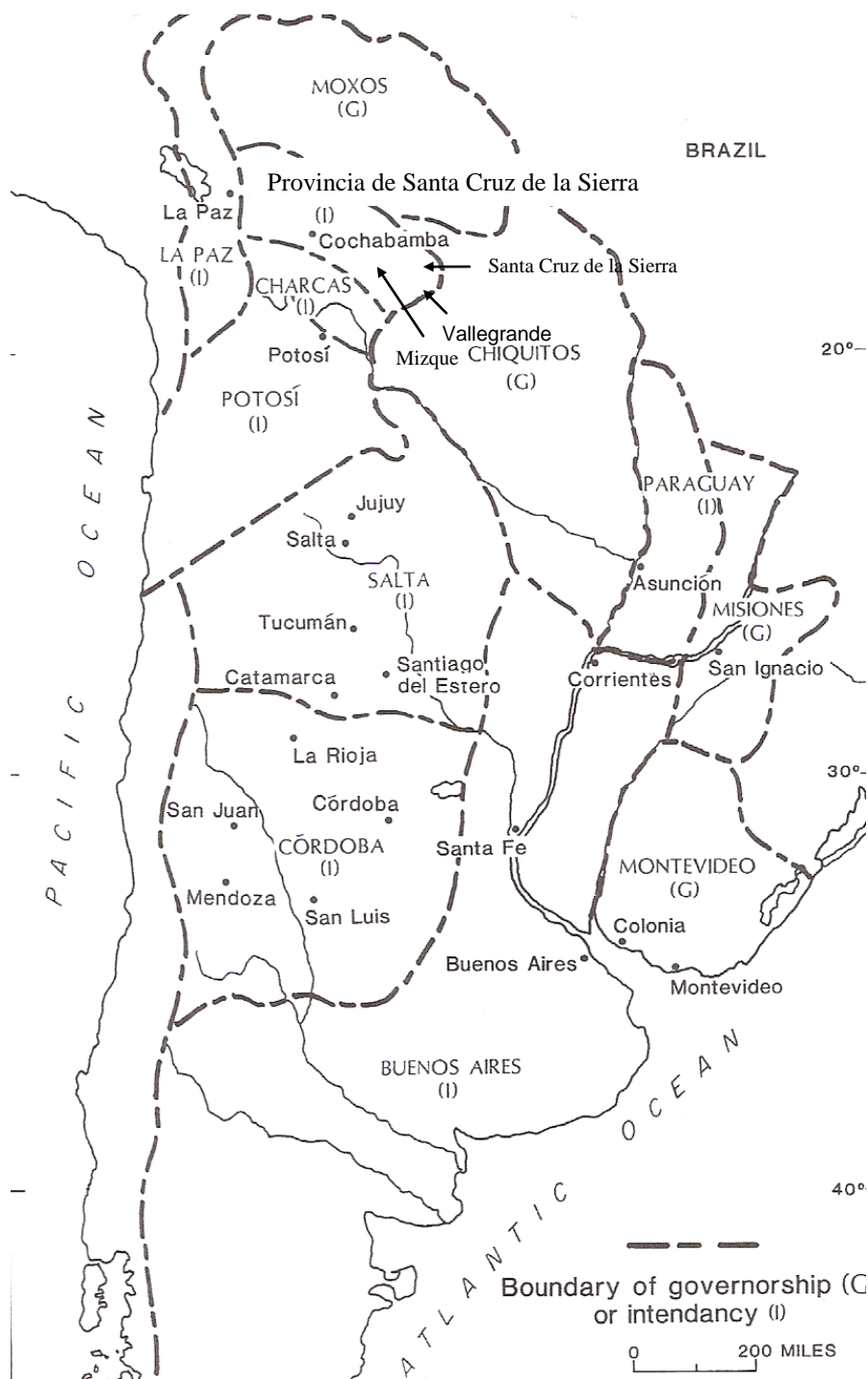
Viedma's Report

The capital of Francisco de Viedma's intendency was the city of Cochabamba, founded in 1571. The capital was located in the center of a system of large highland valleys that had once supplied a large proportion of the grain needed to feed the urban population of the massive mining center of Potosí, but had fallen on hard times as silver production began to fall during the seventeenth century. The new intendency also included three other cities: Mizque (1603), Vallegrande (circa 1614), and San Lorenzo de la Barranca¹⁷ (1590), an assortment of smaller towns and rural hamlets, and a number of indigenous *reducciones* (new towns for Indians) and missions. Mizque served both to extend the boundaries of Charcas's productive hinterland, and to check the advance of indigenous groups from the lowlands, while Vallegrande and San Lorenzo were built principally as military outposts meant to protect the eastern flank of the Charcas Audiencia from indigenous attack, and to connect distant Santa Cruz de la Sierra to the rest of Charcas.¹⁸

In 1776, Spain created the Viceroyalty of La Plata out of territory that had once been under the authority of the Viceroyalty of Peru, and established Buenos Aires, the modern capital of Argentina, as its capital. The move reflected growing British pressure upon Spanish shipments of Andean silver through the Caribbean, for the new viceroyalty enabled Spain to send silver shipments to the south through Argentina and directly to the

¹⁷ Known variously as San Lorenzo el Real de la Frontera, San Lorenzo de la Barranca, and eventually Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Peña et al., 21.

¹⁸ Klein, 43; Gutiérrez Brockington, 43, 49, 51.



Map 2: The View from Buenos Aires: The Rio de la Plata Intendancies and Governorships of the 1780s. Source: Adapted from Rock, 63.

Atlantic Ocean via Buenos Aires. The date selected for the creation of the new viceroyalty clearly reflects this preoccupation with British power in the region as it took advantage of Britain's distraction with what would become known as the Revolutionary War in a number of Britain's American colonies to make its move.¹⁹

The Spanish crown also used the occasion of the new viceroyalty to launch a series of administrative reforms in South America's southern cone.²⁰ The impulse behind these reforms began in Spain under Philip V, the first Spanish king of the Bourbon monarchy. Phillip brought French attitudes toward organization and bureaucracy, as well as a passel of French advisors into his court. While Philip and his successor, Ferdinand VI, focused their reform efforts within Spain itself, Phillip's son, Charles III, was the first to initiate these reform efforts within Spain's American colonies.²¹ One of the principal goals of the Bourbon policies was to shift from an economic policy based almost entirely upon silver production and move to a model that encouraged greater agricultural and productive development and freer trade. Among the chief cogs in the new Bourbon machine were the intendants, governors with broad powers to direct military, financial, economic and judicial matters within their respective intendancies.²² Viedma was the first intendant of Santa Cruz, one of four such districts that were set up in the Rio de la Plata viceroyalty in 1784.²³ In October of 1787, Francisco de Viedma was ordered by his superiors in Buenos Aires to give a full report of his intendancy, its cities and towns,

¹⁹ Rock, 61.

²⁰ Klein, 78-79; Rock, 62.

²¹ Fisher, 1.

²² Ibid., 1-2.

²³ Klein, 78-79.

population, racial demography, economic condition and productive capacity.²⁴ The result, completed in 1788, was a detailed account of over forty urban communities and their residents.²⁵

Viedma's inquiry into the circumstances of the foundation of Vallegrande did not arise out of any particular personal interest in its history—he attempted to provide some historical information for all of the major cities in his intendancy, notably Cochabamba itself, Mizque, and San Lorenzo. For instance, while he did possess some information regarding the foundation of the city of Mizque, he also complained about the poverty of its archives.²⁶ In the case of Vallegrande, he justified passing along information that he considered to be hearsay by claiming that he had already engaged in a fruitless search of Vallegrande's secular and ecclesiastical archives for more verifiable historical information.

The racial and demographic information Viedma collected probably served both his fiscal and political agendas. The report's primary fiscal objective was to identify those segments of the population who were obliged to pay tribute to the crown. Viedma was particularly interested in distinguishing indigenous subjects from other racial groups. As many studies have shown in the case of Charcas, large numbers of Indians had been able to modify such things as dress, occupation and language to *pass* as mestizos; thus, one of the functions of Viedma's census was to put as many of such people as possible back into

²⁴ Viedma, 29.

²⁵ It was published a few decades later under the title "*La Descripción Geográfica y Estadística de la Provincia de Santa Cruz*"; On the 13th of October of last year, 1787, that Most Excellent Lord, Your Excellency's predecessor, ordered me to send to that Superior Government a detailed account that, naming this capital and its divisions, would give them to understand their situation and temperaments; include a prudent calculation of the leagues that comprise the entire district; the number of souls, distinguishing between the colors in the Province in its entirety.²⁵ (My translation); Larson, 174.

²⁶ Viedma, 85.

the *indio* category. Viedma was especially active in this regard in Cochabamba, and even employed a new race category, *cholo*, to denote someone who was not a mestizo, and perhaps not exactly an Indian, but who in any event was deemed indigenous enough to be subject to the Indian tribute.²⁷

With the exception of the term *cholo*, the demographic categories utilized by Viedma: *español*, *indio*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, and *negro*, reflected the language of the King's 1786 instructions to the intendants. Individuals placed into the *mestizo* and *español* categories did not pay tribute, although they paid other taxes. It was critical to separate individuals with some African ancestry, the *negro* and *mulatto* categories, from the others because, like Indians, they were obliged to pay the royal tribute, which for *negros* and *mulattos* was set at a standard rate of 24 reales for every man eighteen years old or older, even though they received none of the associated rights that tributary Indians received for their fiscal category.²⁸ Here the *mulatto* category appears to absorb all *pardo* or free *casta* racial categories for persons of African descent. But while Viedma makes careful accounts of total tribute payments from Indians in each district, he never mentions collecting tribute from blacks or *afromestizos*. Given his interest in increasing total tribute payments to the crown it seems likely that he would have included these figures had they existed. Viedma makes special mention of the active role that *Vallegrandino* militias played both in the settlement of the region, in response to *Chiriguano* attacks, and even against Portuguese incursions into the borderland between *Charcas* and *Brazil*. It

²⁷ Jackson, 6.

²⁸ Fisher, 194; Larson, 112.

may be, like other regions of Latin America, that the free castas who had been mobilized into local militias were free from tribute obligations.²⁹

While Viedma's interest in the region's racial demography was partially motivated by fiscal concerns, his report was also meant to attend to other concerns of the Bourbon state, particularly its interest in maintaining or improving order and in bolstering productivity. Recent events must certainly have lent political value to distinguishing between Indians and other groups in the census: the indigenous rebellions led by Túpac Amaru, Túpac Katari and others that had mobilized hundreds of thousands in Upper and Lower Peru had only recently been put down in the early 1780s.³⁰ These attempted revolutions drew people from all races and castes into the fray, from mestizos and criollos alike, and certainly made some colonial officials believe that the race war that they had long feared had begun.

Viedma was just as interested in limiting sloth. The Bourbon notion of order was clearly tied to productivity, and in such an environment unproductive behaviors, notably vagrancy and drunkenness, were considered crimes. From the Crown's perspective, the most obvious targets in this quest for social order were persons of mixed race. Viedma singles out persons of mixed European, indigenous and African descent: mestizos, cholos, zambos and mulattos as particularly unproductive in the conclusion of his report:

[Local landowners] will become obliged to extract labor from the mestizos, cholos, zambaigos and mulattos, who compose the majority population of the province, occupying them in their labors, by which means they will successfully

²⁹ Fisher, 195; Vinson, 28.

³⁰ Klein, 74-78.

banish their idleness, which is due, in part, to a lack of occupation.³¹ (My translation)

While the indigenous population had been doubly harnessed to the state through tribute payments and participation in the mita or corvée labor system, persons of mixed race, although taxed, were more difficult for the state to control. For Viedma, the solution was force:

And who in light of their experience could stir up even the most remote hope for such persons? Clearly the less reflective or wise would give up [on them], considering the disease to be incurable. However, I am persuaded that everything can be obtained through an inflexible constancy, supported by the maximum prudence in policing. Such policies need to be implemented in order to teach these people what is good for them.³² (My translation)

The historian Christine Hunefeldt has shown that arrests for drunkenness and vagrancy rose dramatically in the second half of the eighteenth century; arrest serving as a mechanism for acquiring cheap labor. In this context, the jail became a tool for binding persons considered to be able but idle workers to some form of productive activity.³³

Thus, while Viedma's report of his tour of his intendancy is useful as a snapshot of the region near the end of the colonial period, the report was also significant in that it reveals a great deal about Viedma's attitudes towards the region and the peoples in his charge. His efforts to increase tax revenue from the indigenous segment of the population were quite successful, and were seen as Viedma's most notable achievements during his

³¹ "... y se verían obligados a echar mano de los mestizos, cholos, zambaigos y mulatos, de que se compone la mayor población de la provincia, ocupándolos en su laboreo, por cuyo medio se conseguiría desterrar la ociosidad que en parte, por falta de ocupaciones, tienen" Viedma, 162.

³² "¿Y quién a vista de experiencias podrá fundar la más remota esperanza a semejantes designios? Claro está, que, aun el menos reflexivo y cuerdo, desahuciará la enfermedad por incurable. No obstante, me persuado puede todo conseguirse con una inflexible constancia, revestida de las prudentes máximas de policía, que deben adoptarse para hacer conocer a estas gentes su bien." Ibid., 169.

³³ Hunefeldt, 401-402.

incumbency. However, his extractive measures further impoverished the people of the land, draining the region dry of capital. Ironically, the result was further disorder and lawlessness, as desperate people found new ways of avoiding payment. Regarding his other objective, that of motivating or even forcing persons of mixed race into work he viewed as productive, apparently the disease was incurable after all: for all of his bravado, he could never get Spain to support his plans, and the local *hacendado* class eventually lost interest in his vision. In the end, the unproductive region that Viedma encountered in the 1780s suffered even further decline under his direction during the final decades of the colonial period before the onset of the wars of independence.³⁴

³⁴ Larson, 258, 288-292.

Without a doubt, one of the tasks that require arduous labor and constancy is to attempt to outline the history of a pueblo. –To dust off a few files (*legajos*) of ancient documents (*expedientes*); consult tradition with persons whose word is sufficiently trustworthy regarding the past, all for the exact understanding of the coming generation; and then, measure one against the other with the objective of deducing that which truly occurred, has been the intention of those who write these lines, who, although lacking the necessary knowledge for such an important work, at least wish to provide some historical, geographical and statistical data for the Provincia, offering at present a work that, although deficient and incomplete, will serve in the future as a foundation for others who, guided by this sort of sentiment, also wish to dedicate to the good of the nation some part of their effort, adding a page to the great book of history.³⁵

The reappearance of Viedma's report, along with his census of the region and his statements regarding its foundation and origins, must have been jarring for the Vallegrandino community; an account from a different world. For one, the population of the region had grown a great deal during the nineteenth century. In 1788, Viedma reported that Vallegrande had a total population of 8,427.³⁶ In 1826, Vallegrande was one of three urban centers in a province that had shrunk to 6,889, but by 1900 the population of the region had grown to about 24,000.³⁷ The city of Vallegrande had also grown from a population of 832 in 1826 to nearly 2,500 in 1900, when it was one of eleven urban centers in the region.³⁸ Although general population density had increased, the region was still about 80 percent rural.

In 1900, the region's racial demography was also quite different than that which had been described by Viedma in 1788. In the 1900 census, including figures from the areas pertaining to Comarapa and Samaipata as well, *españoles*, or *blancos*, (in the language of every census after 1856) grew from 38 percent to 43 percent of the regional

³⁵ Menacho and Molina, 1.

³⁶ Viedma, 104.

³⁷ *Censo General*, 376.

³⁸ Minus Pampagrande. *Censo Nacional*, 376; Menacho and Molina, 6-7.

population, the mestizo category grew from 31 percent to 44 percent, and the *indio* or *indígenas* category grew from just 2 percent to 19 percent of the total. *Negros* continued to constitute less than 1 percent of the population, and six percent of the population was not labeled by race. Significantly, there does not appear to have been a mulatto category, which had represented 29 percent of the Vallegrande region's population in 1788, and as much as 38 percent of the smaller curato of Vallegrande, (which excluded Samaipata and Comarapa/Chilón).³⁹

The reprint in *Provincia* of the Viedma report did enable the authors to inspire the next generation of local historians, but the new generation's response was principally to contest the colonial representation reprinted in the 1895 narrative. From the early 1920s through the end of the 1950s, Vallegrandino historians actively worked to construct a new foundation narrative for their region, a history complete with a new cast of characters. One of the early sites for both the contestation of older narratives and the construction of new ones was a Vallegrandino paper called *Reflejos*, which was printed sporadically from 1921 until 1926. In it we hear the voice of Vallegrandino boosterism, touting the region's productive potential, and celebrating signs of the region's modernization, such as the arrival of electricity.⁴⁰ The paper aired old frustrations over a lack of inter-regional infrastructural development, and used a growing sense of regional identity to reinvigorate old claims to a separate Departmental status from Santa Cruz.⁴¹

³⁹ Viedma, 104-106.

⁴⁰ *Reflejos*, 27 June 1926, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24 July 1921, 2; 1 January 1922, 3; 6 March 1926, 2; 1 July 1926, 2.

Its message throughout was that Vallegrande was a distinct region with a unique culture and an exceptional people.⁴²

As a venue for the discussion of Vallegrande's place in Bolivian history, *Reflejos*' timing was excellent: published during the period of the centennial anniversary of the defeat of Spanish forces in 1825, the paper celebrated a century of independence with a flurry of articles discussing the role of Vallegrandinos in the wars of independence. There was also a raft of young intellectuals ready to turn their attention to old historical questions, and to fill in the many gaps in the region's historical record. Among the collective goals of this group of young historians was to locate historical sources that would shed light on the region's colonial past, particularly the events surrounding its foundation, and also to debunk Viedma's allegations about the African ancestry of the region's founders. These men would come to form a 'textual community' of Vallegrandino scholarship, which Rappaport defines as "a group of people whose activities revolve around the interpretation of key texts ... The unit coalesces around those who interpret the texts and unify them."⁴³ Through the careful selection and manipulation of a group of historical texts, these scholars created a new and more recognizable narrative for their region than the one they inherited from Viedma.

Reflejos appears to have ceased operations by late 1926, but over the next several decades Vallegrandino historians continued their efforts to collect and publish historical information about Vallegrande. In 1931, law professor and politician, Angel Sandoval, published the first formal history of Vallegrande since 1895, called *Vallegrande: Anillo*

⁴² *Reflejos*, Oct. 14, 1926, 1.

⁴³ Rappaport, 201-202.

de unión Transandina, over the course of three editions of the *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica “Sucre”*.⁴⁴ *Vallegrande* was reminiscent of *Provincia* in that it reprinted Viedma’s report, and included updated information regarding the economic development of the region. However, *Vallegrande* also included a great deal of new data, particularly the names and other descriptive information for the entire party involved in Escalante’s expedition and, most notably, the entire 1612 cédula authorizing Escalante’s expedition and settlement efforts. This appears to have been the first time that the cédula was made available in print, although its contents had been alluded to in *Reflejos* by another local historian as early as 1921, Father Adrián Melgar i Montaña, a young priest from Postrevalle, a town in the Vallegrande region.⁴⁵

Father Melgar, who had regularly contributed to *Reflejos*, also began to publish many of his findings in the 1930s. In January of 1936, Melgar published the first volume of what he called *El Archivo* through the Academia de Historia Ecclesiastica Nacional, and released volume eight, the last edition, in 1937. Unlike Vallegrande, *El Archivo* was not a single narrative, but a collection of geographic, genealogical, and other historical information that presented the details of various historical events, places and structures, and information about famous individuals and prominent families, all presented as raw chunks of data. In what was becoming an almost ritualized act, it included yet another reprint of Viedma’s report. Another example, one of the early works of the Vallegrandino and Cruceño historian, Hernando Sanabria Fernández, published in two editions of the *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Históricos y Geográficos* in 1949, included a list of

⁴⁴ Melgar, 204.

⁴⁵ *Reflejos*, Aug. 6, 1921, 2.

Vallegrandino alcaldes and presidents. Finally, in 1959, Father Melgar published his *La Historia del Gran Vallegrande* in two volumes, which included much of the information originally published in *El Archivo*, as well as a great deal of new information regarding the wars of independence in the Vallegrande region, and lists going far back into the colonial era of the former incumbents of a number of ecclesiastical and secular posts in Vallegrande. *Gran Vallegrande* is not written in narrative form, but is arranged topically and chronologically. Volume 2 begins with a reprint of the 1612 cédula, which had begun to take on the trappings of a sacred text. In 2008, both volumes of *Gran Vallegrande*, along with all eight editions of *El Archivo*, were reprinted in a single volume, *Historia del Gran Vallegrande*.

Pardos and Caballeros Pardos

Viedma's eighteenth-century allegation that Vallegrandinos had African ancestry, although more than a century old, still angered Vallegrande's twentieth-century intellectuals. Viedma's claims were probably particularly wounding because Vallegrandinos were and are known throughout Bolivia for their strikingly European appearance.⁴⁶ An example of this local ire appears in the September 1926 edition of *Reflejos* in which the author strikes down Viedma's claims and offers an explanation of his own:

... And this [issue] of the Caballeros Pardos has nothing to do with what were, in Viedma's opinion, "freedmen", nor anything to do with the color of the first residents; but that the families Caballero and Pardo (who even today have descendants here) were the first and principle titular citizen-residents [vecinos]. (My translation)⁴⁷

⁴⁶ "Una valentía que le viene en los genes", *El Deber*, undated—from Walter Romero Franco collection.

⁴⁷ "... y que aquello de los 'Caballeros Pardos' no dice relación según opina Viedma al carácter de 'libertos', ni al color de sus primeras pobladores; sino a que las familias de Caballeros y Pardos (que hasta

Here the author completely rejects the word *pardo* as a reference to race, and attempts to recast the story as an allusion to notable local families with ancient roots in Vallegrande. The author's claims are erroneous: the surnames Pardo and Caballero do not appear as important figures in the region's earliest years. More importantly his statement anticipates much of the material that was eventually published on the history of Vallegrande, which foregrounds narratives involving the region's more well-known families, their lineages, and their European ancestry.

Father Melgar, referenced earlier, took another approach to the problematic word *pardo*: he conceded that the term was a reference to race, but suggested a different racial meaning for the word. Melgar had very extensive knowledge of the region's parish records, which he later used to construct the lineages of the region's principal citizens. In a later *Reflejos* article he claimed:

During the colonial period the majority of the inhabitants of this valley had a color that tended toward black, for this reason they called the Vallegrandinos "pardos". They weren't either Chiriguano or Spaniards, but the fruit of both of these races that formed a third, the pardos, who were the most numerous. This adjective does not correspond to the city; it was a racial term that disappeared during the republican period. Today it's seen as a reference to *mote*.⁴⁹ (My translation)

This notion of a dual European/indigenous ancestry was widely accepted by Vallegrandinos by the 1920s. Allusions to biracial ancestry appear many times in

hoy tienen descendientes por acá), fueron los primeros y principales vecinos titulares." *Reflejos*, 2 Septiembre 1926, 1.

⁴⁹ "En la época colonial la mayoría de habitantes de este valle tenían un color que tira a negro, por esto se les llamó pardos a los vallegrandinos, éstos no eran ni chiriguano ni españoles, sino fruto de esas dos razas que formó la tercera de los pardos, y que era la más numerosa. Este adjetivo no corresponde a la ciudad, en la época colonial, era propio de raza que en tiempo de la república se ha suprimido. Hoy se le tiene como mote." *Reflejos*, 2 April 1925, 2-3; Melgar makes the same claim in his book, *Gran Vallegrande*, 19. Here *mote* is a reference to the boiled field corn that accompanies most meals in the Vallegrande region. Mote is often made from corn varieties that are purple or even black in color.

Reflejos, sometimes as part of a uniquely Vallegrandino narrative, and sometimes to suggest an affinity with neighboring regions, notably the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and its residents.⁵⁰

Another early point of contention concerned the name of the city itself. The authors of *Provincia*, Ángel Menacho and Emilio Molina, dropped something of a social bombshell when they reprinted part of a 1664 document from the parish archive written by the *visitador general*, one Señor don Blas Gabriel Gonzales de la Torre, who claimed to be writing his report “in this City of Jesús de Vallegrande de los Montes Claros de los Caballeros Pardos.”⁵¹ The term *caballeros pardos* also matched the terminology used by Viedma in 1788. Melgar was once again the first to challenge the authors of *Provincia* on this point. Melgar admitted that Menacho and Molina had accurately reprinted the 1664 parish document, but referencing the town’s 1612 *cédula*, which had recently become available, he went on to claim that the city’s name had originally been slightly different, it was called merely the City of Jesús de Montes Claros de los Caballeros, and included no reference to *pardos* at all.⁵²

The *cédula* became the key document within Vallegrande’s textual community for the reconstruction of Vallegrande’s foundation narrative. It did this in two ways: first by making different, more socially suitable characters the center of the new narrative, and second, by creating a new trope: the nobility of the founder generation. The *cédula* featured two Spaniards, one the then Viceroy of Peru, don Juan de Mendoza y Luna, the Marques of Montesclaros, and the other, the recipient of the *cédula*, Captain don Pedro de

⁵⁰ *Reflejos*, 2 April 1925, 2-3; 21 March 1926, 1; 14 October, 1926, 1.

⁵¹ Menacho and Molina, 2.

⁵² *Reflejos*, April 2, 1925, 2.

Escalante y Mendoza.⁵³ The now *maese de campo* Escalante had been named the head of an expedition to conquer and settle the region that became Vallegrande, where he would be given a large proportion of the territory settled, apart from the land retained for a city that would be built in honor of the Marques.⁵⁴ By 1620 Escalante was dead and Mendoza had returned to Spain, but they survived as central characters in the new narrative that Vallegrandinos began constructing in the 1920s.⁵⁵

The second piece of the new narrative was the suggestion that Vallegrandinos, far from being the descendants of freedman, were actually granted titles of nobility when they settled the town. The *cédula* was again the source of this assertion. According to the tenth provision in the *cédula*:

Those who have made a commitment to build the said new town, who after having succeeded in carrying out its settlement, as an honor to them and to their descendants [and in] their laudable memory as founders, we pronounce them: *hijosdalgos*, illustrious men of known ancestry (*solar*). To them and to their legitimate heirs, in whatever place they might reside or in any other part of the Indies, they will be *hijosdalgo*, that is persons of noble ascendancy and known ancestry, and enjoying all of the honors and privileges enjoyed by the *hijosdalgo*, gentlemen of Castille ...⁵⁶

These lines copy the language of King Phillip II's 1573 *Ordenanzas sobre descubrimientos nuevos y población*, essentially an urban planning document that drew upon then-current planning practices to promote a uniform system of city planning throughout the Spanish Americas. This particular ordinance, number ninety-nine in the

⁵³ Sandóval, 35.

⁵⁴ Melgar, 70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁶ Mundigo and Crouch, 253; "A los que se obligaren hacer la dicha población y la hubieren poblado y cumplido con su asiento, así mismo se les concede y hace su magestad Hijosdalgo de Solar conocido a ellos y a sus descendientes legítimos para que en el pueblo que poblaren y en otras cualquier partes de las Indias sean Hijos dalgo y personas nobles de linaje y solar conocido, y gocen de todas las honras y preeminencias de que gozan los hombres Hijos dalgo caballeros de Castilla." Melgar, 71.

Ordenanzas, essentially created an urban elite, gentlemen who received extensive land concessions that would ensure their dominance of the region's socioeconomic structure, in exchange for their loyalty and service to the King and his representatives.⁵⁷ This same ordinance appeared in the *cédula* authorizing the foundation of the city of Oruro in 1606: "Those settlers who have taken part in the foundation and construction of this Villa, according to the *padrón*, retain the privilege of *hijosdalgo* according to the royal ordinances."⁵⁸ Here the *cédula* does not copy the language of the *Ordenanzas*, but merely alludes to it, yet the associated privileges are the same.

Adrián Melgar y Montaña was the main architect of Vallegrandino claims to nobility, and seems to have been the first Vallegrandino to contrast the nobility title *caballero* that was built into the 1612 *cédula* and the term *caballero pardo* in his book, *La Historia del Gran Vallegrande*.⁵⁹ In it, he suggests that both are Spanish titles involving status, and endeavors to show that the *caballero* status granted to Vallegrandinos in 1612 was a true title of nobility or *hidalguía*, and proof of noble and untainted bloodlines. Melgar rejected the title *caballeros pardos*, the term used by Viedma, because he recognized that the title did not technically ennoble its recipient, although it did elevate their social status. Melgar would henceforth describe Vallegrande's founders as "hijosdalgo", which he viewed as a nobility title.⁶⁰

While Melgar rejects the term *caballeros pardos* in favor of *hijosdalgos*, he never does explain why the term *caballeros pardos* appeared at all in the 1664 account, nor why

⁵⁷ Mundigo and Crouch, 253.

⁵⁸ "Que á los pobladores que se hubiere hallado á la fundación y erección de esta Villa, conforme al *padrón*, se les guarde el privilegio de *hijosdalgo*, conforme á las ordenanzas reales." Blanco, *cédula* page XVII.

⁵⁹ Melgar, 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

Viedma would mention it in 1788. However, 1664 was not the only time that Vallegrande was described as “de los caballeros pardos”: the term appears again nearly one hundred years later, in 1771, when an ecclesiastical official wrote: “... and twelve leagues from Samaipata, towards the south, is the city of the Caballeros Pardos of Jesús de Montesclaros, also known as Valle Grande, with 3,500 souls, which borders the province of Tomina.”⁶¹ The recurrence of the term *caballeros pardos* in reference to Vallegrande, in spite of the fact that it does not appear in the town’s *cédula* of authorization, is quite curious. If viewed as a Castilian title, as Melgar interpreted it, the application of the term to Vallegrande by colonial officials makes a certain amount of sense. As Melgar stated, *caballeros pardos* were not members of the Castilian nobility. Individuals granted such titles were generally from the peasant classes, *mozárabes* (Christian who had lived under Muslim rule) and even *conversos*, former Muslims or Jews.⁶² In exchange for an exemption from *pechos*, a form of tribute, *caballeros pardos* constituted a militia force that was required to maintain arms and horses at their own expense, but which was expected to use them in service to the King. Although their obligations resembled those of the true nobility, in Spain they were seen as vassals to a local noble. Such individuals were often stationed in the no-man’s-land that constituted the frontier between the Christian north and Muslim south of the Iberian Peninsula. Given the important role that Vallegrande’s militia played in the region’s history, and its location within the

⁶¹ Archivo General de Indias, 1:75.

⁶² There is evidence in *Reflejos* that some Vallegrandinos believed themselves to be descendants of Jewish conversos since at least the 1920s. *Reflejos*, 21 March, 1926, 1.

Chiriguano frontier zone, described later in this study, the reference to Vallegrandinos as *caballeros pardos* seems rather apt.⁶³

It is equally curious, however, that Viedma, a Spaniard, didn't interpret the term in this way. For him, while it was perhaps a reference to some kind of militia or military force, it was also a reference to race. Yet another ecclesiastical report supports this interpretation. In 1682, the Bishop of Santa Cruz reported: "by way of the road I visited the *doctrinas* of Aiquile, Amereque, Chilón and Vallegrande de los Mulatos, which had not been visited by a prelate for thirty years. ..."⁶⁴ A comparison of the various reports suggests that the terms *pardo* and *mulatto* were synonyms, just as the terms often were in practice in much of Latin America.⁶⁵ In the end, the identity of the *caballeros pardos* in Viedma's story remains ambiguous, uncertain, and little investigated by local historians.

In spite of Melgar's earlier efforts to contrast the two terms, he essentially conflates the meaning of the terms *caballeros pardos* and *hijosdalgos* in order to discredit and refute Viedma's speculations: eighteenth-century Vallegrandinos had not meant to claim that their town was founded by free blacks, but claimed instead that the founders, their ancestors, were members of the Spanish military elite, and of noble blood. Vallegrandinos were not the only ones to use royal ordinances such as this one to support nobility claims and elevated status. Ramón Gutiérrez demonstrates the same phenomenon in his study of New Mexico, where the dominating class received "aristocratic titles as 'hijosdalgos of an established lineage' so that they might enjoy the same honors and

⁶³Asso and Manuel, 30; Madramany, 152; Cadenas, 336, 355-257.

⁶⁴Parejas Moreno, legajo 139 (1613-1699), 101-102.

⁶⁵Vinson, 200.

privileges of hidalgos and caballeros in the kingdom of Castile.”⁶⁶ Both cases use the ordinance in an activist manner, redeploying it to serve local interests.

The nobility argument was not entirely accepted during the *Reflejos* period, evidence that there was as yet no consensus regarding the details of the new narrative. One article from *Reflejos* in 1926, written by another member of Vallegrande’s intellectual community, teased Vallegrandinos who attempted to promote their noble ancestry. In it, the author saw this claim to nobility as a fiction given the mixed ancestry of most Vallegrandinos:

I would tell them that few [noble Spaniards] brought their wives, the result of which, unfortunately for the nobles, is that they are like the majority of our pueblo: more a mix of indio, Guaraní or black and Spaniard. Those few who brought their families came with responsibilities, and once they discharged them they returned to the Peninsula.⁶⁷ (My translation)

The author goes on to suggest that instead of touting their supposed nobility, Vallegrandinos should be proud of their reputation as workers. “Work dignifies and ennobles, but does not constitute an ‘aristocracy’, it does not allow one to enter the party of the ‘anointed’, but it is quite superior.” Such statements suggest that some of the tropes that would later predominate in Vallegrandino discourse about the origins of the population had not yet become hegemonic in the 1920s.⁶⁸ The nobility claim was not necessarily central to histories written in the post-*Reflejos* period. Although Sandóval does reprint the 1612 cédula, he does not discuss the issue of nobility. The subject does not appear again until Melgar takes it up in *Gran Vallegrande* in 1959.

⁶⁶ Gutiérrez, 102.

⁶⁷ “Pero, les diré que pocos traían a sus esposas, de donde resulta que desgracia lamente para los nobles son como la generalidad de nuestro pueblo: una mezcla de indio, guaraní [sic] o negro y español. Los rarísimos que traían a su familia, venían con cargos que, una vez desempeñados se retiraban a la Península.” *Reflejos*, 21 March 1926, 1.

⁶⁸ *Reflejos*, 21 March, 1926, 1.

The elements that came to represent the new version of Vallegrande's foundation story appear to reach their fullest expression in the Hernando Sanabria Fernández's *Cronicario de la Ciudad de Jesus y Montes Claros de los Caballeros*, published in 1971. Sanabria was an important historian both in Vallegrande and Santa Cruz. Although some of his work began to appear as early as the 1940s, he published the bulk of his research in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. *Cronicario* is an ideal setting for the crystallization of the semi-legendary elements of Vallegrande's foundation narrative, as it is for the most part a collection of stories from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that place characters from Vallegrande's history into stories from defining moments in Vallegrande's history. A dreamlike, fantastic quality pervades the entire work.

The first chapter of *Cronicario* is an outline of Vallegrandino history, including a short narrative describing its foundation. The Marques de Montesclaros appears, as of course does Escalante. Sanabria repeats the names of the members of Vallegrande's first *cabildo*, or town council, lists the region's most prominent families, and mentions their most illustrious ancestors. Although Sanabria does not reprint the entire cédula, he retains the section that proves the nobility of the founder generation, and uses a section from the cédula that details Escalante's service to the crown as the foundation for a chapter that includes a legend surrounding the exploits of the expedition leader.⁶⁹ In Sanabria's version, the Chiriguano first appear as a force that threatens the existence of the settlement, but is slowly driven off over the course of the seventeenth century, although he admits that a few were assimilated into Vallegrandino society. He does reference the settlers' refusal to obey the royal order to depart, and their efforts to defend the viability

⁶⁹ Sanabria, *Cronicario*, 18-20, 29.

of their project. Sanabria's attitude towards *afromestizos* in this narrative is somewhat ambivalent. He makes reference to them in his allusion to the "fort of the *pardos libres*" and their captain, Domingo de Robles.⁷⁰ In some of his other works, Sanabria proves quite willing to make blacks and other individuals of African descent sympathetic, central characters in the narratives he constructs. Sanabria is also a key source on the early career of Domingo de Robles himself. However, although these subjects do appear in *Cronicario*, they are mentioned only in passing.⁷¹ Instead, the primary subjects of the story are better known Vallegrandinos, often men of proven nobility, and their descendants in the region.

Like other historians of colonial Vallegrande, Sanabria also reprints Viedma's 1788 summary of the city's racial demography. Curiously, while Sanabria includes Viedma's totals for *españoles* and *mestizos*, *negros* and *indios*, and includes the same final population tally, he does not mention the curato's 3,215 *mulattos*.⁷² Sanabria also takes pains to reprint Viedma's description of the town (Viedma was rather critical of its layout), and the section of the report where Viedma praises the region's military contributions, but he does not mention the issues that had galled an earlier generation of

⁷⁰ Sanabria, *Cronicario*, 19.

⁷¹ One story in *Cronicario*, however, raises the phantasm of African or *afromestizo* identity in Vallegrande. In the chapter entitled "*El Señor de Malta*", Sanabria recounts the manner in which the city's patron saint, the *Señor de Malta*, an effigy of Christ in black wood, arrives in the city of Vallegrande in the early nineteenth century. According to Melgar, this black Christ figure was a copy of the "Black Christ", the *Cristo de Esquilulas* in Guatemala, which was sculpted by the Portuguese artist, Quirio Cataño, in 1595. As the property of a priest, the *Señor de Malta* travelled first from Cusco to Cochabamba during the colonial era. Under circumstances that take on semi-magical qualities in Sanabria's version, the figure ends up in the possession of a Cochabambino family who moves (flees?) to Vallegrande during the wars of independence. There is no overtly African connection to the *Señor de Malta* in any of the available accounts. Melgar is even careful to state that the family members who brought the object to Vallegrande were described as *españoles* in a republican census. While I will not claim that the *Señor de Malta* is a signifier of *pardo* identity in Vallegrande, if it is not so, then its presence in Vallegrande is an ironic reference to an *afromestizo* community that is no longer visible in Vallegrandino society. Melgar, 52-53; Sanabria, *Cronicario*, 109-117.

⁷² Sanabria, *Cronicario*, 23.

Vallegrandinos. Given the breadth of his knowledge of the archival records pertaining to Vallegrande and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, it is a pity that we do not also get his take on the issue of Vallegrande's caballeros pardos.

A Hegemonic Narrative

A visit to the center of the city of Vallegrande today reveals the powerful role played by the new foundation narrative in Vallegrande's civic life. Like many cities and towns in Latin America, Vallegrande uses street names to commemorate key dates in its history, adding a spatial component to the act of remembrance. Several of Vallegrande's streets are also named after characters from the town's foundation narrative, people like Viceroy Mendoza and maese de campo Escalante. There are also other clues to the hegemonic power of the new narrative. Some businesses feature a framed version of the 1612 cédula, the narrative's primary text. Another example, a tourist poster from the town featuring the "Himno of Vallegrande," recalls several elements from the narrative as well:

Vallegrande land of the valiant
you are the daughter of the noble Spaniard
who, in bringing us the cross and the sword
redeemed the children of the sun.

In the light of those glorious pueblos
Vallegrande emerged as the offspring
of two glorious, valiant races
which gave it nobility and valor.⁷³

⁷³ "Vallegrande tierra de valientes/eres hija del noble español/que al traernos la cruz y la espada/redimió a los hijos del sol. A la luz de esos pueblos gloriosos/Vallegrande surgió cual la flor/de dos razas heroicas y valientes/que le dieron nobleza y valor." Walter Morales Aguilar, "Himno de Vallegrande", printed in the *Almanaque Vallegranino 2009* (2009), poster.

While Vallegrande was not successful in its early-twentieth-century bid to become a separate department from Santa Cruz, it has successfully preserved its identity as a unique and separate region. Even today, although Vallegrandinos, like many Bolivians, are scattered throughout the country, and some have even moved to Europe and North America, many of them retain a sense of pride in being Vallegrandino, which entails a connection to place, but also shared social traits: egalitarianism, an independent spirit, intelligence, and a reputation for hard work. The twentieth-century version of Vallegrande's foundation story was one of the elements that enabled Vallegrandinos to preserve their regional identity, because it gave Vallegrandinos a past that explained and reinforced the region's modern self-image. While it may be a construction, it was well made, shaped by a group of scholars who knew their people and their region intimately.



Map 4: Vallegrande in 1683. Source: Juan Ramón Connick. “Carta Geográfica de la provincias de la Gobernación del Rio de la Plata.” 1683. Archivo General de Indias.

Chapter 2: Vallegrande as Region and Frontier

Creating a narrative in which afro-mestizos become visible in the conquest and settlement of Vallegrande requires an examination of the long-term processes that not only created the particular cast of characters that people that narrative, but also conditioned the circumstances under which they would interact and determined the roles they would perform. Such processes certainly emanated from the circumstances surrounding the Spanish conquest of Charcas and Paraguay. However, in order to understand Vallegrande’s particular development, it is first important to imagine

Vallegrande in the way that Vallegrandinos long have done: as a unique region.⁷⁴ As a region, the idea of Vallegrande is, thus, not precisely geographical: the shape of Vallegrande as a bounded space has certainly changed over time. The unique set of social, political and economic articulations that created the idea of Vallegrande had important chronological components as well, but all were conditioned by and interpreted and negotiated within a particular space.⁷⁵

During the Spanish colonial period, Vallegrande was a particular kind of region: a frontier. The idea of a region as a frontier, and the social possibilities that this particular kind of region engender, are a key factor in understanding Vallegrande's distinct society and in explaining its unique demography. Anthropologist Ana María Alonso describes a frontier as a place "lying at the margins of state power, between the laws of society and the freedoms of nature, between the imperatives of obedience and the refusals of defiance."⁷⁶ The region in which Vallegrande is situated was such a frontier, but it is simplistic to view this space as simply lying between civilization and savagery, although it was often described as such by colonial authorities. In Vallegrande, frontier meant the space between two societies: the Spanish empire to the west, northeast and southwest, represented by the Audiencia of Charcas, and Chiriguano society to the east. Other indigenous groups, such as the Yuracaré, lay to the north and had a somewhat different relationship with Spanish power and authority. While Vallegrande served as an agent in the vanguard of the Spanish colonial state, it was only weakly controlled (and protected) by that state. As a nexus of two societies and two cultures, it was a place where persons

⁷⁴ *Reflejos*, 14 October 1926, 1.

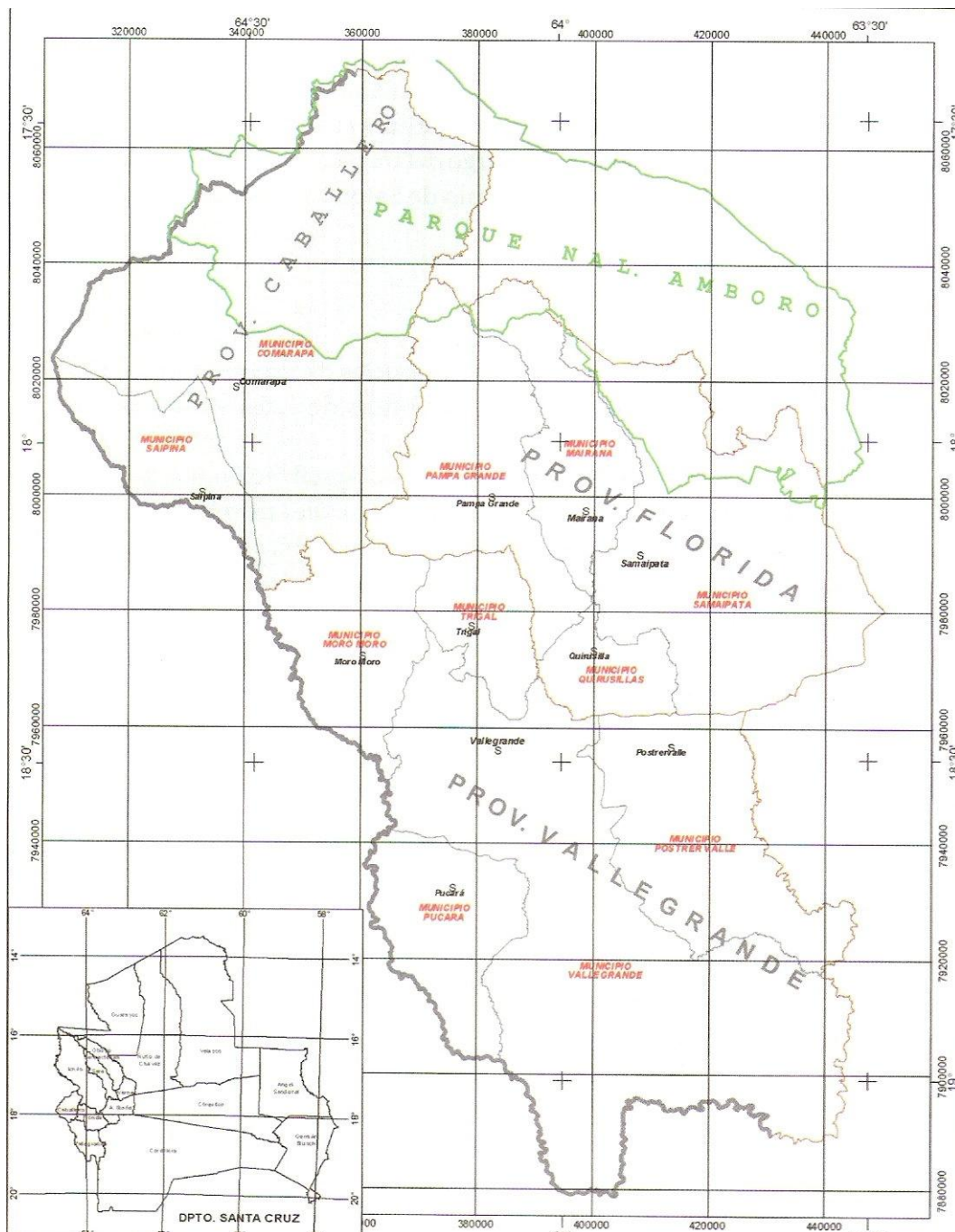
⁷⁵ For the definition of region that I have in mind, see Eric Van Young's "Doing Regional History: A Theoretical Discussion of some Mexican Cases", 22.

⁷⁶ Alonso, 15.

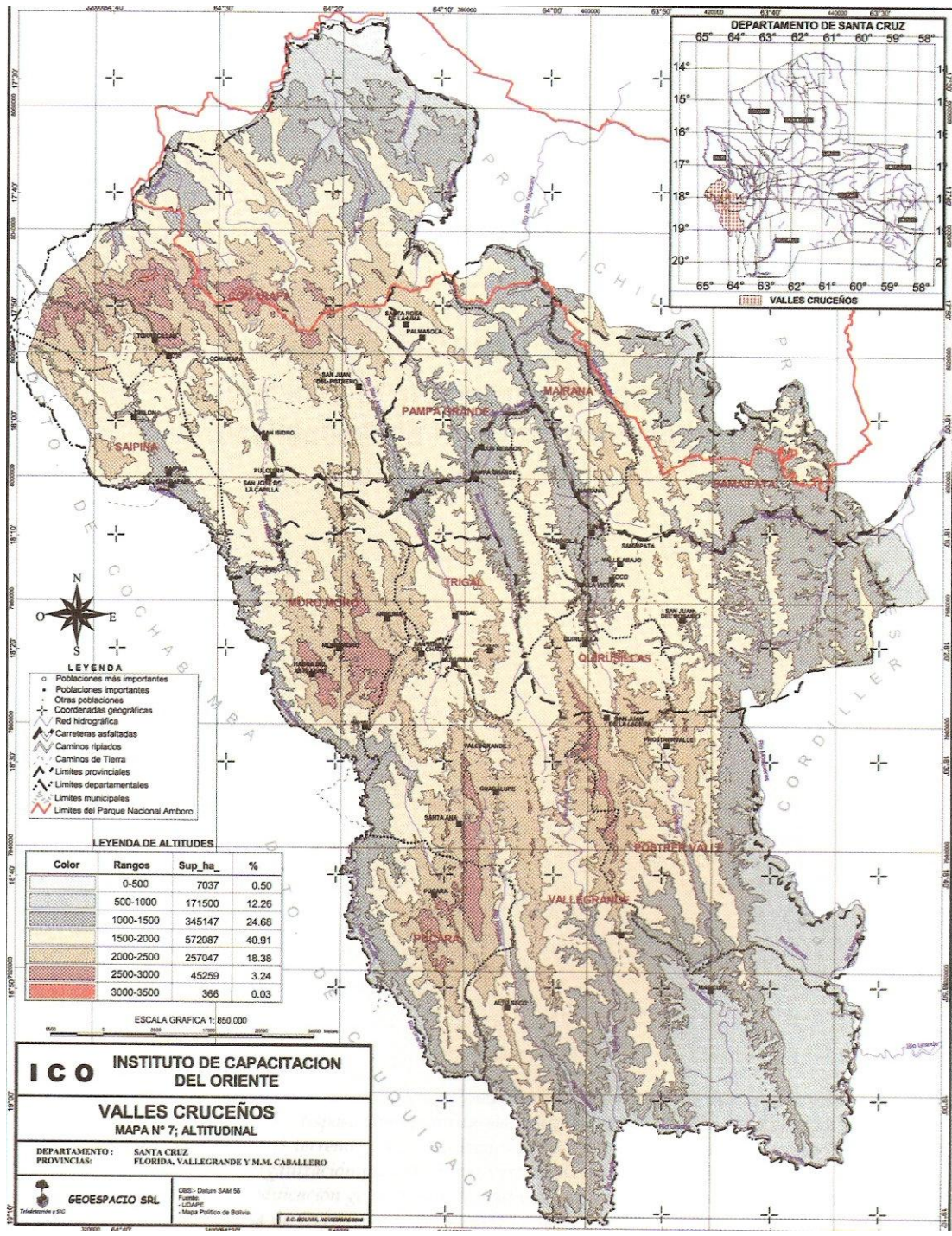
of mixed ancestry and identity, particularly mestizos and afro-mestizos, so despised at the center of colonial society, were able to turn their social marginality to their own advantage. Thus, the presence of Africans and afro-mestizos in Vallegrande at the moment of its foundation, far from unusual or unexpected, was actually quite predictable: Vallegrande was precisely the sort of place where one would expect to find them.

Vallegrande as a Geographical Frontier

Vallegrande's geography was one of the elements that shaped Vallegrande's cultural and economic life throughout its history. While neither true highland nor lowland plain, Vallegrande's topography echoes both. As a place where highland shades into lowland, it provides footholds for temperate Andean cultivars and tropical lowland crops. The historical region of Vallegrande is divided into three provinces: Vallegrande, Manuel María Caballero and Florida, representing the original loci of Spanish settlement: Vallegrande, Chilón and Comarapa, and Samaipata. (Map 5) Together, the three regions form a rough right triangle, the longest side of which slopes from northwest to the southeast; the triangle's right angle points off to the northeast. (See Map 6) The region is a geographic frontier in many respects, as one of the easternmost edges of the Andean range, it separates highlands from lowlands. Its southern boundary, the Rio Grande, is also the southernmost major river of the Amazon watershed, which turns northward upon leaving Vallegrande, flowing into the Mamoré, which in turn flows into the Guapure River that forms Bolivia's boundary with Brazil. Further south, the rivers of the eastern Andean slopes flow southeastward to feed the Paraguay, the Paraná and the Rio de la



Map 5: Modern Political Boundaries of the Provincia de Vallegrande. Source: Cárdenas, 31.



Map 6: Topographical Map of the Provincia of Vallegrande. Source: Cárdenas, 105.

Plata. The system of long, deep north/south-oriented valleys that dominate its topography are breached at the center of the region's triangle by a river system that flows eastward through the walls of two massive valleys before turning northward to become the Yapacaní River, another tributary of the Mamoré. The rivers of the bisected valleys flow into this system as well, thus unifying the three valleys into a single system at the heart of the region. This breach forms a natural crossing point between Bolivia's western highlands and eastern lowlands. Rivers to the west and south of this core region flow into the Mizque and the Grande, and rivers to the east near Samaipata form the Piraí, which flows first east and then north past the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra on its way to the Mamoré and, eventually, the Amazon.

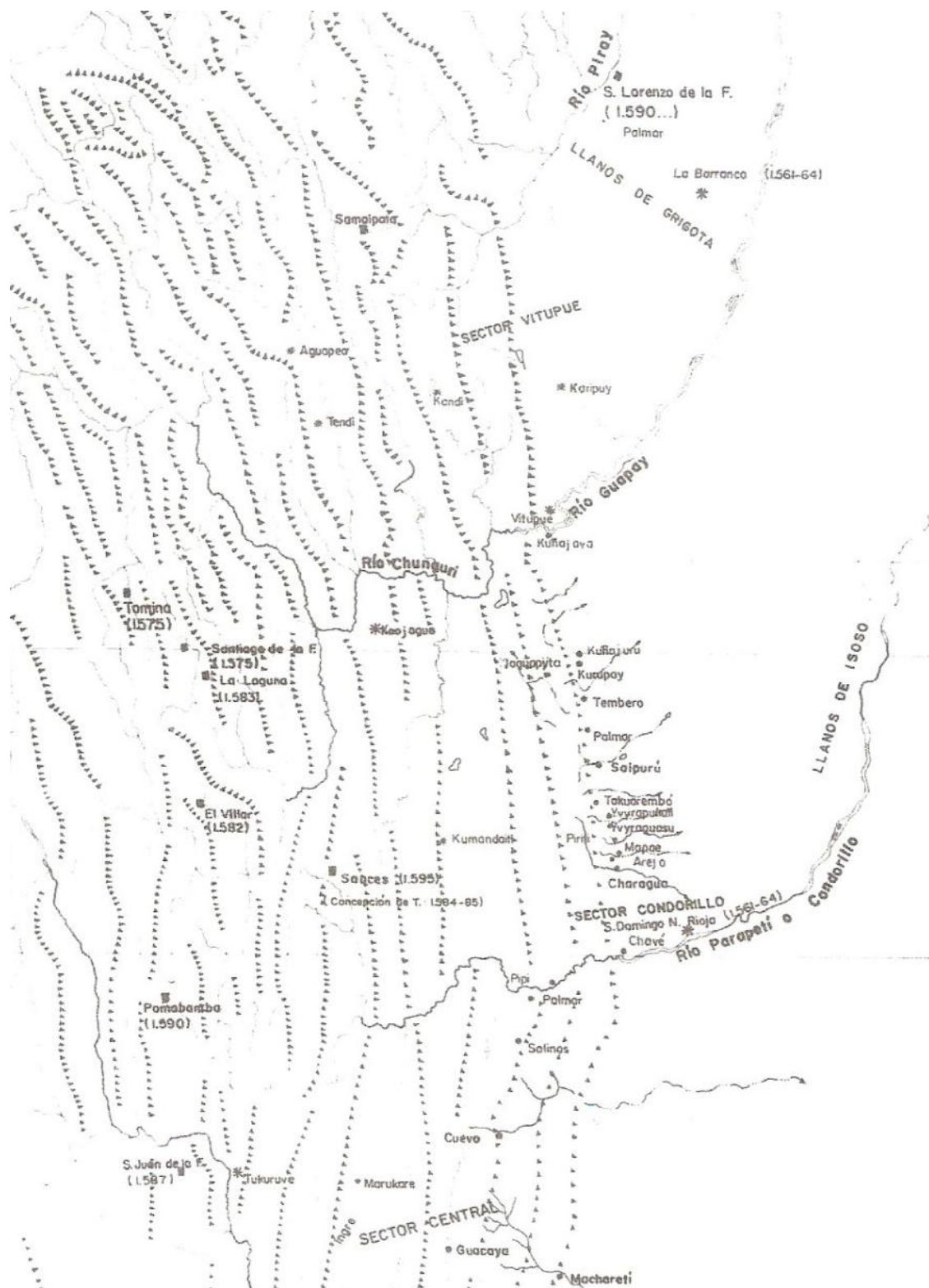
As a region where highland valleys quickly yield to expansive lowlands, Vallegrande is a region of extremes. The highland regions west of Vallegrande included both very large and intermediate valley systems like Cochabamba and Mizque that supported large numbers of sedentary farmers. The flat plains were a vast tropical forest. Vallegrande's valleys were not large compared to those to the east and west, but its extreme topography created microclimates for both highland and lowland agricultural products. The steep hills that separate the region's valleys, described by one Jesuit traveler as "the ribs of America's enormous body" sometimes rise to 9,000 or 10,000 feet.⁷⁷ A tributary of the Grande called the Mizque, which forms much of the region's western boundary, flows into the region at 4,500 feet. The Grande flows out of Vallegrande at only 1,500 feet above sea level. Vallegrande has two seasons, a warm wet season beginning in September or October, and a cold and dry season beginning in March

⁷⁷ *Mojos*, 139; Cárdenas, 105.

or April, after which time there is little rainfall for as many as six months.⁷⁸ During the wet season the Grande, fed by myriad streams and several rivers, and hemmed in by steep canyons, becomes one of the most dangerous rivers in Bolivia.⁷⁹ Extremes of altitude and seasonal rainfall lead to vastly different climates in Vallegrande's highlands and valleys. The highlands, especially the eastern slopes, are often forested and well watered by mist and cloud. While highland valleys are often temperate, the larger valley floors, especially those at the region's center and in the Mizque/Grande basin to the west and south are generally dominated by cactus, some as tall as trees. During the rainy season, clay soil and loose rock often make roads impassable. During the dry season, animals and humans compete for water in the region's few permanent streams and rivers.

⁷⁸ Cárdenas, 39.

⁷⁹ d'Orbigny, 326-328.



Map 7: The Chiriguano Frontier in the Sixteenth Century. Source: Pifarré.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Map dates appear to include several errors.

Vallegrande and the Chiriguano Frontier

The Vallegrandino frontier, and the society it created, was the product of its unique physical environment, described above, but more importantly it was shaped by a unique set of historical processes that came to pit first the Inca Empire, and later the Spanish Audiencia of Charcas, against the Chiriguano people. These processes took place within a much larger frontier zone that I will call the Chiriguano frontier, of which Vallegrande occupied only a small segment. Chiriguano communities were largely distributed along a north/south axis in the foothills of the eastern Andean range where the highlands met the lowland plains. These settled communities extended from the Grande or Guapay River in the north to nearly as far south as the Bermejo River, which forms part of the modern boundary between Bolivia and Argentina. Between the line of Spanish towns to the west and Chiriguano communities to the east lay, for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a region of scattered, often short-lived settlements, that occupied the contested space that had become the frontier; communities that were quite often beyond the protection and effective control of either side.

Birth of a People and a Frontier

Anthropologist Alfred Métraux suggests that the indigenous peoples who lived in Vallegrande's valleys had once been part of a broad zone of mixed Andean and lowland (Arawak) cultural influence until two factors transformed the region into a transition zone that separated highland culture from lowland culture.⁸² The first factor was the conquest of the region by the Inca. During the reign of the Inca Pachacuti Yupanqui (1438-1471) the Inca Empire converted Andean cultural influence into Inca dominance in the region

⁸² Métraux, 467.

that became Upper Peru or Charcas when the Inca conquered the region's local tribes and resettled different ethnic groups in the newly conquered lands (*mitimaes*), especially the large highland valleys like those of Cochabamba and to a lesser extent Mizque. There is evidence that Inca dominance extended all the way into the lowlands beyond Vallegrande.⁸³ By the end of the fifteenth century, the Inca offensive in the eastern Andean region became defensive when Guaraní Indians, arriving in several waves of migration from what is now Paraguay, began to enter the region. Between the late fifteenth through the mid-sixteenth centuries, the Guaraní became the second major factor in the process of social and cultural change that would create the Vallegrande frontier when they conquered and assimilated many of the lowland indigenous communities along the eastern Andean range, especially a group called the Chané, forming a somewhat hybrid culture known as the Chiriguano or Ava.⁸⁴ The Inca responded to the Chiriguano invasions by building fortifications, like the one above Samaipata, between Vallegrande and Santa Cruz, to guard against their attacks.⁸⁵ These defensive efforts failed, and the Chiriguano, along with other indigenous groups including the Yuracaré, Mosekene and Chimane, continued to attack highland communities along the eastern Andes from Sucre to Mizque and Cochabamba and lowland settlements, such as Santa Cruz de la Sierra long after the Spanish empire had taken over control of these regions in the mid sixteenth century. In time, "Chiriguano" became a pejorative term that included all indigenous groups hostile to Spain's colonial ambitions.⁸⁶

⁸³ Stern, 20; Vázquez-Machicado and Vázquez-Machicado, 89-90.

⁸⁴ Métraux, 465-467; Saignes, 24.

⁸⁵ At Samaipata the Inca, and later the Spaniards, built upon the foundations of earlier lowland indigenous, perhaps Chané, settlements. Gamboa, 15-16; Molina M., 38.

⁸⁶ Métraux, 485; Gutiérrez Brockington, 24.

Within this contested space, Vallegrande and its associated Spanish settlements constituted virtually the only part of the frontier that Charcas was to completely wrest from Chiriguano control during the colonial period. The few Chiriguano settlements thought to be in the vicinity of what would become Vallegrande were probably destroyed during a military expedition led by soldiers from Santa Cruz de la Sierra in 1584, and the communities founded by Escalante in the 1610s, although largely unable to halt Chiriguano attacks in the region, were permanent settlements, succeeding where other expeditions to the south had failed.⁸⁷ The central and southern portions of the frontier, as well as the Chiriguano heartland to the east, were only slowly brought under the control of colonizing forces through the mission system, a process that was far from complete by the close of the colonial period. Erick Langer describes the relationship between the frontier missions and the Chiriguano, a topic that will not be dealt with extensively here, as one of interdependence and self-interest. Especially during the late colonial and early republican periods, missions and their missionaries served a useful purpose in protecting Chiriguano society and property from the encroachment of Spanish and later Bolivian society and agricultural expansion.⁸⁸

Charcas and the Chiriguano

The growing power of the Spanish viceroyalty of Peru began to be felt in the Eastern Andes by the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1538 Francisco Pizarro's brothers, Hernando and Gonzalo, founded the city of Chuquisaca (variously known as La Plata, Charcas, and Sucre) far to the south of Lake Titicaca in Upper Peru. Chuquisaca

⁸⁷ Pifarré, 80-81; García Recio, 362, 376.

⁸⁸ Langer, 4, 16-17.

later became the capital of the Spanish administrative division known as the Audiencia of Charcas. In 1545, miners on the *altiplano* (high plain) near Chuquisaca discovered rich and easily accessible silver deposits in a mountain (*el cerro rico*) surrounded by a fairly desolate section of the altiplano. The city that sprung up at the foot of the cerro rico and its mines, called Potosí, became the center of a system of labor and trade that sparked agricultural development and the foundation of new urban centers throughout much of the southern Andean region, all driven by the growing demands of Potosí and its flow of silver metal.⁸⁹ Chuquisaca and Potosí, and soon the city of La Paz, founded in 1548, formed the nucleus of the Charcas Audiencia, which included all of what was known as Upper Peru, including the lands surrounding Lake Titicaca to the north, lands to the south near what would become northwestern Argentina, connections to the Pacific coast, and far eastward to the tropical lowlands and the Brazilian frontier.⁹⁰

At the same time as Pizarro's brothers were launching expeditions into what became Charcas, a similar wave of expeditions from the Atlantic side of the continent began to create Spanish settlements in what would later become Paraguay and Argentina along the tributaries of the Rio de la Plata. Pedro de Mendoza established the city of Puerto Nuestra Señora Santa María del Buen Aire in 1536 on the south side of the Rio de la Plata estuary, but while this settlement would be abandoned by 1541, the city of Asunción, founded by his deputy, Pedro de Ayolas, on the Paraguay River in 1537, would endure and prosper. Juan de Garay later outfitted an expedition in Asunción that lead to the refoundation of the city of Buenos Aires in 1580. Under the leadership of

⁸⁹ Klein, 34, 40-41.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

Domingo de Irala, who controlled Asunción for more than thirty years, Paraguay became the starting point for future expeditions into the Amazon basin and the eastern Andean range, especially for expeditions in search of the legendary cities known variously as El Dorado, Moxos, El Gran Paitití and other titles.⁹¹ Another one-time resident of Asunción, Ñuflo de Cháves, continued this quest for undiscovered cities of gold to the north of Asunción with the full blessing of the authorities in Lima, who also authorized him in 1560 to set up a new Governorship in the region, initially referred to as Moxos, that would be independent of Asunción, but attached to the Audiencia of Charcas. In 1561, Cháves founded the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, which would serve as the capital of the new Governorship, with a group of colonists from Paraguay. Santa Cruz later served as the nucleus for future settlements throughout the Amazon basin and the eastern Andean range.⁹²

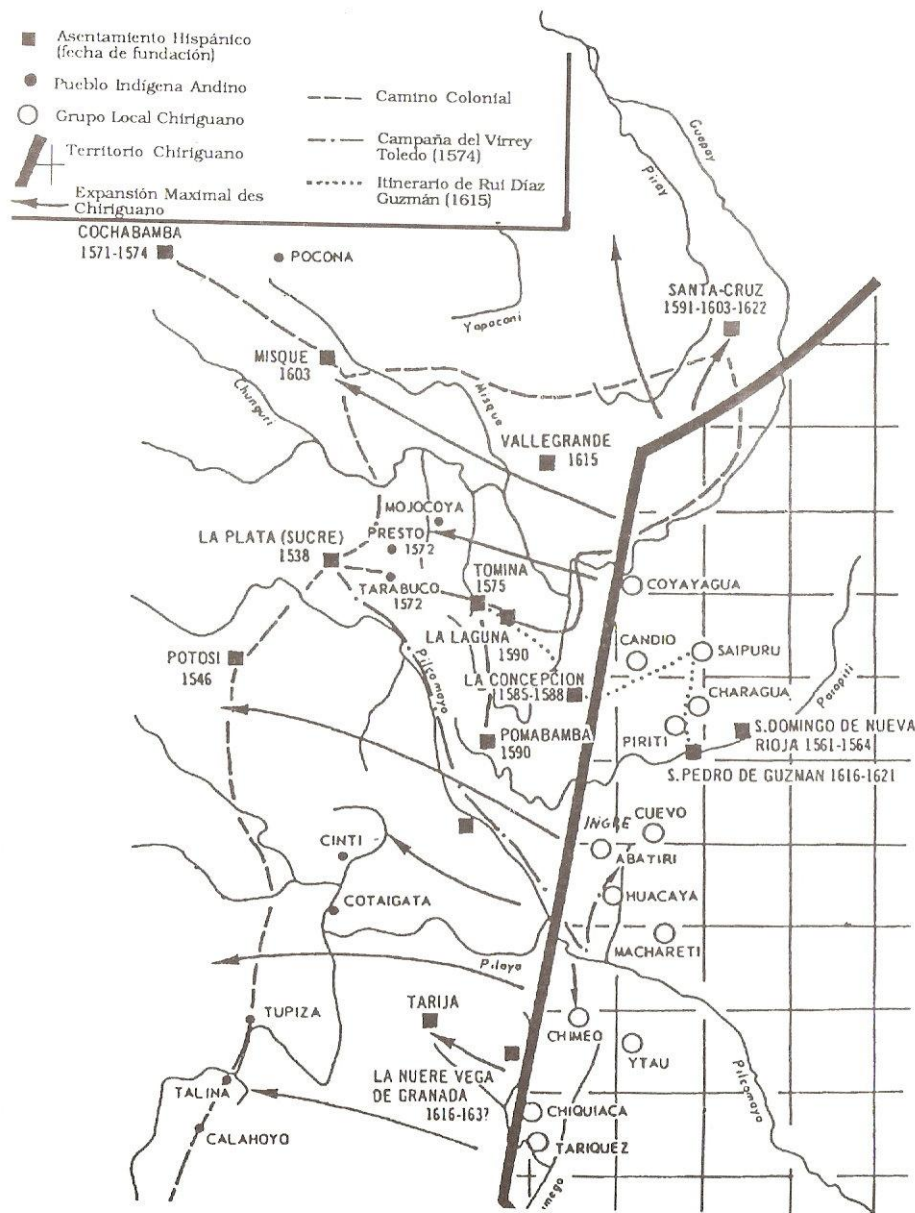
The expansion of both the Audiencia of Charcas and of the Chiriguano community eventually created a frontier zone between the two societies. Chiriguano attacks against Spanish settlements began in the 1560s, but the Spanish expeditions organized to combat them generally ended in failure.⁹³ Viceroy Toledo's 1574 military expedition against the Chiriguano also went badly, but the experience prompted him to take up a different strategy: the settlement of towns that were strategically located to defend the core of the Audiencia from attack that also maintained a foothold on the edge

⁹¹ Rock, 10-12; García Recio, 22.

⁹² García Recio, 40. Rock, 13-14. Peña et al, 20, 51-54. These colonists were a mixed group, including indians, mestizos, and European immigrants who included, as Roig and Reichsfeld argue, European Jewish *conversos*. Roig and Reichsfeld, 3.

⁹³ García Recio, 96.

of the frontier zone in order to launch future offensives. He constructed Tarija in 1574 and Tomina in 1575 for this very purpose.⁹⁴



Map 8: The Chiriguano Frontier and Charcas. Source: Saignes, 39.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Saignes, 48; García Recio, 100.

⁹⁵ Map dates appear to include several errors.

The Tomina settlement, an early racial melting pot, also seems to have been a site where the socially marginal could seek to build their social and material capital in Charcas. A large proportion of the settlement's population consisted of Africans and *afromestizos*. In his book *Ava y Karai*, Thierry Saignes cites a census of the town in 1609 that places the population at "93 married men and 88 single 'Spaniards', 48 mulattos and 102 mulattas, [and] 15 black slaves."⁹⁶ In Francisco Pifarré's 1989 study of the Chiriguano, he also confirms that a large proportion of Tomina's population in 1600 was of African descent.⁹⁷ Recruits from the various settlements around Tomina later took part in several of the expeditions into the frontier zone and included some of the key individuals who took part in the conquest of Vallegrande.

In 1582 and 1583, Charcas attempted to expand the settlement zone around Tomina, authorizing the foundation of the settlements of San Juan de Rodas, San Juan de la Frontera and El Villar.⁹⁸ In another settlement attempt, Captain Miguel Martín founded the town San Miguel de la Laguna at the end of 1583. A group of Chiriguano soldiers soon attacked Martín's settlement, killed the captain and about 15 others, and carried away a number of Indian servants and black slaves.⁹⁹ The attack sparked another round of military expeditions against the Chiriguano. Separate expeditions from Tarija, the Mizque valley, and Santa Cruz attacked Chiriguano settlements and successfully defeated Chiriguano forces all along the frontier. According to Pifarré, the Cruceño expedition, led by Governor Suárez de Figueroa, "included a troop of seventy-five archers, over 1,000

⁹⁶ Saignes, 58.

⁹⁷ In Appendix "E" he writes "Tomina (1575): ciudad clave de contención y defensa. En 1600, llegó a tener unos 600 habitantes, con muchos mulatos y negros para servicio." Pifarré, 447.

⁹⁸ Saignes, 103.

⁹⁹ Charcas, 97; Díaz de Guzmán, 77; García Recio, 103.

indios de servicio and 150 Itatin or Guarayo Indians.” It seems likely that this expedition targeted settlements in what became Vallegrande, perhaps destroying them completely.¹⁰⁰ The Mizque expedition, led by *maese de campo general* Fernando de Cazorla, targeted the Pojo valley, located in the center of the Vallegrande region. Cazorla’s troop amounted to about 100 soldiers, including black slaves, and an equal number of indigenous servants: a mix of European, African, and indigenous soldiers that came to be a common formula in local military expeditions.¹⁰¹

The 1584 expeditions were devastating for the Chiriguano, and weakened their hold over the frontier region. However, Viceroy Conde del Villar chose not to follow up on these victories and settle the lands they had taken from the Chiriguano. Instead, what followed appears to have been a prolonged period in which the Audiencia and the Viceroyalty were at odds over how to proceed with the conquest of the Chiriguano. Nearly all of the expeditions launched were smaller efforts to repopulate older settlements and expand new ones, while consciously manipulating conflicts between different Chiriguano communities in order to weaken their collective ability to resist the stabilization of Spanish settlements.¹⁰² San Lorenzo de la Frontera, founded in 1590, was one of the few key towns established during this period. The Villa de Salinas del Río Pisguera (later known simply as Mizque), established in the Mizque Valley in 1603, grew out of a long period of Spanish settlement in the valley, and not, strictly speaking, within the frontier zone.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Pifarré, 80-81.

¹⁰¹ Gutiérrez Brockington, 29; Pifarré, 81.

¹⁰² García Recio, 105, 109, 111-112.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 107, 111; Gutiérrez Brockington, 43.

Africans, Afromestizos, and Resistance in the Chiriguano Frontier

The black slaves who were taken captive by the Chiriguano in the 1583 attack on La Laguna, as well as the slaves who participated in the Cazorla's 1584 reprisal in the Pojo Valley bear witness to the activity of the African slave trade in Charcas, and the presence of African slaves within and along the Chiriguano frontier. At times, African slaves and their descendants both slave and free, actively represented the colonizing force of the Audiencia or, in their flight, joined the Chiriguano in their struggle against that state. As frontier settlers, Africans and afromestizos were both victims and perpetrators of the violence of the frontier, key players in the events that shaped the region and its people. It was the idea of African slaves in their flight from the cruel conditions of the haciendas of Mizque and Tomina that sparked the imagination of Francisco de Viedma in his 1788 report, and fueled his speculations regarding the conquest of the region.

Slavery in Charcas

Black slaves were essential actors in the economic and even social development of the Audiencia of Charcas. Slaves worked in deplorable conditions alongside Indians in Potosí's mines, toiled in the Casa de la Moneda minting coins, and served as domestic servants for wealthy families in Potosí, La Plata, and other cities and towns where they added extra splendor and prestige to ceremonies and parades. Only about 10 percent of the perhaps ten million slaves brought to the Americas went to Spanish America. About half went to the colonies on the Caribbean islands, one third went to Brazil, and another

6 percent went to North America.¹⁰⁵ Black slaves took part in the conquest of Upper Peru, and froze alongside Spaniards in the early years of the Potosí mine.¹⁰⁶

Charcas in 1570 was an overwhelmingly indigenous environment. Out of 737,000 people, the indigenous population made up about 95 percent of the population, around 700,000 people. Of the rest, only about 30,000 of them, or 4 percent, were Africans and mestizos (here a single category). Less than 1 percent, 7,000 people, were described as whites.¹⁰⁷ Early on, slaves came to Upper Peru and Charcas by way of Panama, Callao and Lima, but with the permanent foundation of Buenos Aires in 1580, the officially sanctioned slave traffic flowed up the Rio de La Plata and passed through Córdoba, Tucumán, Salta, Jujuy and finally Potosí and Charcas. Illegal slave traffic abounded, however, and in reality there were many ways to exchange slaves for silver in Potosí.¹⁰⁸ By 1650 the population in Charcas had grown by 150,000 to 850,000, of which Indians were still 88 percent or 750,000. There were 30,000 Africans, 3.5 percent; 50,000 whites,

¹⁰⁵ Thornton, 317. Crespo, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Crespo, 24, 25, 28-29; “Carta de Don Bartolomé Astete de Ulloa a S.M., acerca de que convendría introducir negros de Angola para la labor de las minas. Potosí, 10 de Febrero de 1617.” J. Vazquez-Machicado, no. 1126, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Crespo, 30. He also lists 1,350 *vecinos*, which were a category separate from whites or mestizos, perhaps *criollos*, in this case American-born whites.

¹⁰⁸ Guzmán, 3-4. Gutiérrez Brockington, 179-180. Rock, 14.

Chart 2: Charcas in 1570

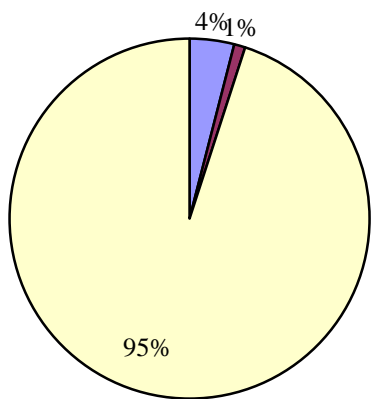
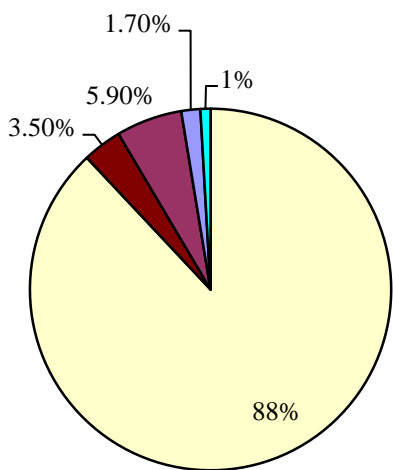


Chart 3: Charcas in 1650



almost 6 percent; 15,000 mestizos, or 1.7 percent; and 5,000 mulattos—less than 1 percent.¹⁰⁹

Slavery was not just an urban phenomenon in Charcas; during the sixteenth century, most of the slaves of Charcas were probably put to work in the region's many haciendas, including those along the Chiriguano frontier.¹¹⁰ In rural Charcas slaves worked as skilled agricultural labors in vineyards, sugarcane fields, and cattle ranches. In Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington's book, *Blacks, Indians and Spaniards in the Eastern Andes*, she explores the economic and social development of Mizque, the region adjoining Vallegrande to the west. Although the Spanish town of Salinas (Mizque) was not officially recognized until 1603, Spaniards had controlled land in the area for quite some time. The earliest reference to slavery that Gutiérrez Brockington found in Mizque dated to 1551, not long after the last of the Pizarros was defeated in Charcas, and more than 50 years before the foundation of the town.¹¹¹ In a similar manner, demographic information for the city of Tomina, mentioned above, suggests that the settlement contained slaves when it was founded in 1574. The attacks on La Laguna in 1584 are evidence that Tomina's satellite settlements did as well.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, while demand from Potosí and Chuquisaca was still strong, viniculture was big business along the Chiriguano frontier.¹¹² Viniculture was heavily dependent upon slave labor, and many slaves became highly-trained specialists in the industry. Entrepreneurs planted vineyards all along the temperate valley floors of the Chiriguano frontier, and filled them with their black slaves and

¹⁰⁹ Crespo, 30.

¹¹⁰ Gutiérrez Brockington, 136-37.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43, 132; Klein, 35.

¹¹² García Recio, 112; Díaz, 77; Viedma, 105; Gade, 82-84.

indigenous servants. While these entrepreneurs were often private citizens, frequently former soldiers who had won *encomiendas* in their service to the crown, many also belonged to the mendicant religious orders, particularly the Franciscans and the Jesuits. The Jesuits appear to have owned the largest haciendas in Mizque, and their vineyards were the sites that utilized the most slaves. The Jesuits developed two large haciendas there: Chalgvani and La Havana. When the Jesuits were expelled from the Spanish colonies in 1767, the two properties had a total of 134 slaves.¹¹³

Beyond viticulture and other industries, slaves were highly sought after in the cattle industry, as many of them brought expertise with cattle and even horses with them from their home regions in Africa. As John Thornton puts it in regard to the island of Hispaniola:

It is perhaps no wonder that all the *vaqueros* and *ganaderos* (cowboys) on the mid-sixteenth century Hispaniola estates were not only Africans but from Wolof, Fula, and Mandiga areas, where there is a strong equestrian and cattle-raising tradition. The value of Africans from these regions did not diminish as Native Americans learned the skills, though; in the mid-seventeenth century the Cape Verdian sailor Lemos Coelho noted the demand for slaves from the Senegambian area because of their skills with horses and cattle. Angolans also possessed cattle raising (though not equestrian) skills; the cattle raisers of Venezuela in the mid-seventeenth century were from Mbundu groups.”¹¹⁴

Slaves with prior experience in livestock management were also sought after in Mizque, although ranching probably required fewer experts than viticulture.¹¹⁵ The proliferation of cattle *estancias* within the frontier zone, and varying degrees of Chiriguano resistance and accommodation to their expansion must have brought African

¹¹³ “African slaves worked in the agricultural sector—primarily in the key industries of viticulture, sugar production, and livestock, often as highly skilled labor. They were not confined to domestic service, as popular wisdom holds. ... They worked in the service sector as highly mobile, widely traveled *recua* drivers and as town criers.” Gutiérrez Brockington, 150, 158, 170, 279.

¹¹⁴ Thornton, 135.

¹¹⁵ Gutiérrez Brockington, 172.

slaves and their descendants into regular contact with the Chiriguano. This contact was sometimes violent, but could also develop into relationships of trade and material and cultural reciprocity.

Cattle and Corn

While the armed struggle between Spanish and Chiriguano society resulted in a stalemate for much of the colonial period, one arm of Spanish colonization efforts was more successful in pushing back the boundaries of the Chiriguano frontier. All along the frontier, the proliferation and expansion of cattle haciendas put constant pressure upon which the Chiriguano and their property by overrunning and even reshaping the environment of the lands upon which the Chiriguano depended to practice their largely corn-oriented agriculture. Thus it was cattle, not soldiers or settlers, that most effectively colonized the Chiriguano frontier.

Cattle, horses, sheep and donkeys probably colonized the entire Chiriguano frontier long before the establishment of its first Spanish settlements. Military expeditions, such as Viceroy Toledo's failed attempt to pacify the Chiriguano in 1574, brought cattle and other livestock along with them to feed the soldiers and carry their equipment.¹¹⁶ Ruy Diaz de Guzmán described bringing 500 horses and mules, and 250 cows, steers and bullocks with him on his own failed expedition in 1616.¹¹⁷ Some of the animals that escaped or were simply left behind in these instances survived and thrived in the temperate valleys where their former masters could not yet establish a permanent foothold. The Carmelite Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, while traveling through the as yet

¹¹⁶ Saignes, 39.

¹¹⁷ Guzmán, 84.

unpopulated valleys between Chilón and Samaipata in the late 1610s or early 1620s noted that large numbers of these animals had already settled them.¹¹⁸

Livestock were also standard colonists in frontier settlements. King Phillip II's ordinances probably codified what was already common practice when they ordered that each *vecino* in a new town first acquire "ten cows, four oxen or two oxen and two young bulls and a mare, five pigs, six chickens, twenty sheep from Castille" and build a house within a specified time period before they could claim land within the settlement as their property.¹¹⁹ Within the ideal settlement envisioned within the *Ordenanzas*, each settlement would "allocate sufficient public land and [pasture] where the cattle the [vecinos] are expected to bring with them can obtain abundant feed, plus another portion for the natives of the area."¹²⁰ It is likely that Spanish settlements, such as those cropping up along the eastern reaches of Charcas, were the source of a regular supply of runaways to add to the reservoir of feral beasts that lived far beyond the reach of formal settlement.

Both feral and domestic cattle were agents of environmental change that transformed the temperate valleys into regions less suitable for agriculture than they had once been. This process occurred both within the boundaries of colonial settlement and in the sparsely settled frontier. Overgrazing caused extensive erosion of the vertical landscape of the highland valleys, while simultaneously transforming the region's flora as the grasses and plants favored by cattle lost ground to the succulent or spiny plants they rejected.¹²¹ In the 1830s, the naturalist Alcides D'Orbigny commented on the harm cattle and cattle ranching had done to the ecology of the Chilón valley, once a highly

¹¹⁸ Vásquez de Espinosa and Velasco Bayón, 848.

¹¹⁹ Mundigo and Crouch, 253.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹²¹ Langer, 25.

productive center for wine production and agriculture. “It is difficult to imagine [the valley’s] earlier prosperity,” he said, “[w]hen one sees the hills surrounding Chilón nearly naked, barely covered, here and there, with a few thorny bushes or cactus; when one sees its valley abandoned, or at least uncared for, hardly used in its thousandth part.”¹²²

D’Orbigny felt that deforestation, which he felt was caused by the regular burning of the hills to regenerate pasture for the cattle, was the principal cause of the region’s decline. Just as cattle ranching would damage the agricultural enterprises of colonial settlements, the same degenerate process pushed the Chiriguano, farmers dependent upon corn production, to retreat before the advancing herds, as cattle reduced and degraded the land suitable for crop production.¹²³

In addition to an unknown population of feral animals, cattle belonging to small haciendas pushed the boundaries of Charcas into the Chiriguano frontier. As outposts of the Spanish empire, Pifarré describes small haciendas as “spontaneous and precarious”¹²⁴, informal settlements established without title or authorization, and certainly without formal boundaries. Cattle haciendas sprung up first in the outskirts of formal colonial settlements, such as Santa Cruz, Tomina, Padilla, Tarija and others, but even encroached upon Chiriguano communities and, later, the missions themselves, as entrepreneurs moved into areas of the valleys that lay further and further from colonial centers of power.

The Chiriguano did not simply accept the proliferation of haciendas on their lands; haciendas that established themselves within the frontier, far from colonial

¹²² D’Orbigny, 23.

¹²³ Pifarré, 166.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

assistance, often became sites of violence. Díaz de Guzmán mentions regular Chiriguano raids upon both cattle ranches and vineyards near Tomina, the principle settlement in a region of many such haciendas, in the 1580s and 90s. The increasingly abundant cattle were easily hunted, and theft was common.¹²⁵

The principal agents or entrepreneurs in these informal cattle operations were what Pifarré describes as the “floating population” of Potosí and Chuquisaca, individuals who had not been integrated in the societies of Charcas and the somewhat more distant Paraguay—poor Spaniards, certainly, but also many persons of mixed ancestry and identity, in short, the same individuals who constituted the military face of the frontier. Within the Chiriguano frontier zone, tensions often erupted into violence between Chiriguano groups and new settlers from the Audiencia. We have seen how black slaves, indigenous servants, and others, as settlers in the frontier, were sometimes captured or killed by the Chiriguano during attacks that targeted the new vineyards or estancias. Men captured in Chiriguano raids were generally killed, while women and children were forcibly integrated into Chiriguano society. Some captives were kept alive because of their unique skills, such as the example of Blas, a black captive who was forced to make weapons for one group of Chiriguano until he managed to escape from them when a group of Cruceños attacked them in the 1580s.¹²⁶ Conversely, the Chiriguano regularly sold indigenous captives as slaves to Spanish landowners.¹²⁷

One attack that had implications for one of the future founders of Vallegrande occurred in 1598. A group of Chiriguano soldiers, led by a mulatto guide, attacked the

¹²⁵ Díaz de Guzmán, 77-78.

¹²⁶ Saignes, 72.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

property of a pardo landowner named Domingo de Robles near the new settlement of San Juan de Rodas. During the attack, the invading party killed Robles' wife and his brother-in-law, described as a Spaniard, and another twelve of Robles' indigenous servants. The attackers also carried off a number of servants, as well as Robles' daughter. In spite of the spirit of equivocation that reigned at the Audiencia and Viceroyalty levels, on the local level, the frontier remained a war zone of competing settlements and interests, although it included a remarkably similar cast of characters on both sides.¹²⁸

While these forward positions of colonial society were sites of violence, they were also sites of cultural exchange. It seems clear that attack was a possibility, but it is also apparent that both societies found ways to benefit from the relationship. Landowners were known to pay tribute to local Chiriguano groups for the right to pasture cattle on Chiriguano lands, and the Chiriguano themselves began to acquire livestock of their own.¹²⁹ Saignes describes an account in which Spanish landowners near Tarija, on the southern end of the Chiriguano frontier, resisted the efforts of the Franciscans to move a local group of Chiriguano into their missions, citing a long history of peaceful coexistence and occasional exchanges of labor between the Spanish and Chiriguano communities.¹³⁰

Crossing the Frontier

While black slaves and their descendants were agents in the expansion of the Audiencia of Charcas into the frontier region, colonial officials were also preoccupied by the potential threat posed by the growing black and mixed-race population of Charcas, a

¹²⁸ Díaz de Guzmán, 79.

¹²⁹ Saignes, 79; Langer, 27.

¹³⁰ Saignes, 79.

community that the elite found difficult to monitor and control. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, officials in La Plata were wondering what to do with their free black population, which was widely seen as lawless, heathen, and uncontrollable, as the following extract from 1585 suggests:

The President and Magistrates of My Royal Audiencia [of La Plata] in the Province of Charcas ... I have been informed that in those provinces there are many negros, mulattos and mestizos and people of mixture and every day their numbers continue to grow, and many of them are huidos, have no idea who their fathers are ... growing up with great vices and liberty, out of work ... eating and drinking beyond control, mixing with the Indians, indulging in drink and witchcraft, not attending mass nor hearing sermons they know nothing of the holy Catholic faith, and if things continue this way great harm and inconvenience will arise ... look into this matter and see that these damages be avoided and that these people be Christianized and taught skills and do not mingle with the Indians, as I have ordered in earlier rulings.¹³¹

Efforts were made to control free blacks, mulattos and mestizos by binding them and their labor to elite families as *arrenderos*, and restrict their movement by allowing them brief absences to travel to places only a short distance from their patrons. Attempts were made to keep castas from owning *yanacona* servants of their own, riding horses and other trappings of status, and from carrying arms, gathering together in groups or other seemingly threatening behaviors.¹³²

The urge to quantify and make legible the casta population continued to preoccupy colonial officials in the seventeenth century. In 1609, a letter from Lima to the president of the Audiencia of Charcas requested that he “send an account of the number

¹³¹ Quoted in Gutiérrez Brockington, 259.

¹³² “R.C. al virrey de la provincias del Perú o a la persona o personas a cuyo cargo fuere el gobierno de ellas. A pedido de la ciudad de la Plata, manda que se guarde lo proveído por don Francisco de Toledo, virrey que fue de esa provincia, acerca de que ningún negro ni mulato pueda tener en su servicio yanacunas ni otros indios ningunos.” Libros Registos-Cedularios de Charcas, 1563-1717, Agosto 16, 1607 [678]; “R.C. al marqués de Montesclaros, pariente, virrey, gobernador y capitán general de las provincias del Perú. Manda que ponga el remedio necesario para atajar los inconvenientes que se presentan en el distrito de Potosí debido a la ociosidad de mulatos, mestizos y zambaigos.” Libros Registos-Cedularios de Charcas, 1563-1717. April 10, 1609 [742].

of free mulattos, *zambaigos*, negros and mestizos in the district, and if they could be grouped into reducciones.” A second letter from Lima in 1612, the same year that Don Pedro de Escalante was authorized to found a city between Mizque and Santa Cruz, demands the information it had requested in the earlier letter, repeats that the president of Charcas look into putting its free blacks and mestizos into reducciones, and adds that they be made to pay tribute.¹³³

Colonial documents, like the one above, regularly attack the character of casta and black individuals. Blacks, mulattos, and mestizos were routinely described as vagrant and idle in official correspondence. Black slaves working in the Royal mint were described as perverse (although here the motive to keep them away from the rest of society is clear).¹³⁴

Along the Chiriguano frontier, slave masters certainly feared for the lives of their African slaves, which at a value of between 500 and 1000 pesos for able-bodied, adult workers were a large investment, but landowners and officials in Charcas were also afraid that African slaves and their descendants, inspired by the success of the Chiriguano, might decide to join the attackers.¹³⁵ In fact, this is what sometimes happened. There are a number of instances in the colonial record where blacks, mulattos, mestizos, non-

¹³³ April 10, 1609 letter, in *Libros Registos-Cedularios de Charcas, 1563-1717*, Catalogo (Buenos Aires: Instituto de la Investigación de la Historia del Derecho, 1993), no. 742; *Ibid.*, November 10, 1612, no. 769. “R.C. al licenciado Alonso Maldonado de Torres, presidente de la Audiencia de la ciudad de la Plata, de la provincia de los Charcas. Manda que envíe relación acerca del número de mulatos, zambaigos, negros y mestizos libres que hay en ese distrito, si se podrían agrupar en reducciones y si convendría dicha medida.” *Libros Registos-Cedularios de Charcas, 1563-1717*; “R.C. a don Diego de Portugal, presidente de la Audiencia de la ciudad de la Plata, de la provincia de los Charcas. Responde dos cartas del 12 de marzo de 1611 y agradece el cuidado que ha puesto en la buena administración de la justicia y en la extirpación de vicios y pecados públicos. Ordena que envíe relación de las personas beneméritas, eclesiásticas y seculares. Reclama la relación que se pidió sobre la conveniencia de hacer reducción de los mulatos, zambaigos, negros y mestizos y de que paguen tasa.” *Libros Registos-Cedularios de Charcas, 1563-1717*. November 10, 1612 [769].

¹³⁴ Crespo, 25.

¹³⁵ Charcas, vol. 1, Dec 27, 1582: 36-37; Gutiérrez Brockington, 146-147, 263.

Chiriguano Indians and even Spaniards willingly joined Chiriguano society and supported its attacks against the Spanish state. While mestizos probably made up the majority of these individuals, according to Saignes, around the time of the 1580 expedition mentioned above, two mulattos led a troop of Chiriguanos that included “many mestizos, mulattos, and a few blacks” against the Cruceños.¹³⁶ In the latter example, it is notable that the same mixed-race persons who were regularly denigrated in Spanish bureaucratic discourse were able to achieve positions of leadership among the Chiriguano by joining the ranks of their professional warriors.¹³⁷

In the space separating the socially and racially heterogeneous front of Spanish colonization efforts and the equally heterogeneous Chiriguano raiding parties there was occasionally room enough for a third community that lay out of reach of either side. These unauthorized communities, where they existed, were places of refuge from the Spanish colonial state, and evidence of the weak presence of colonial authority and control in parts of the frontier even late into the eighteenth century. Thierry Saignes identifies one such community within the boundaries of what was then the partido of Vallegrande in 1784, or about the same time that Viedma made his visit to the partido. According to Saignes’ source:

... some ten leagues from these missions [in Piray] a place named Mosquera is being colonized, which is a [portugalete] of delinquents and people with perverse habits, whose scandals are notorious ... they live like pagans ... there are as many as fifty people of both sexes and all ages ... [T]he majority of those who have found refuge in that [Rochela] are lost people, zambos and mulattos and various Indians avoiding tribute payments.¹³⁸ (My translation)

¹³⁶ Saignes, 72.

¹³⁷ Díaz de Guzmán, 79.

¹³⁸ Saignes, 78. Saignes does not explore the meaning of the term *Portugalete*, and merely suggests that it signifies a place of refuge. It is unclear why it would be a reference to the city in the Basque region of northern Spain, or if it is a reference to Portugal and Brazil. The uncertain etymology of the place name Portugalete is also of no help.

According to Saignes, Mosquera¹³⁹ was located at the intersection of Santa Cruz, Samaipata (part of Vallegrande at the time) and Vallegrande partidos, and clearly quite near to the Chiriguano missions just north of the Grande River. The description, written by the then bishop of Santa Cruz, closely mirrors the language of the extract above that describes the “floating population” of Charcas, once more noting their criminal natures and their perverse, unchristian habits, and the strong connection to *calidad*. It is a pity that the bishop does not enumerate the scandals for which the community was famous, but it would not be surprising if here, too, there were allegations of witchcraft, given how frequently Africans and fromestizos are associated with magical powers in colonial records.¹⁴⁰ Although Mosquera may have been the only community of this type within Vallegrande in the late eighteenth century, Saignes identifies at least two others in the Chiriguano frontier region between Vallegrande and Tarija. While we have already identified how colonial settlements on the frontier offered a place of refuge and potential social mobility within Spanish colonial society for mixed-race and socially marginal persons, in Mosquera we find a place of refuge, as late as the final decades of the eighteenth century, where a small number of individuals were able to escape colonial society completely.

In spite of the pressures settlers, and especially their livestock, put upon Chiriguano agricultural productivity, close proximity and regular interaction between the two groups led to a certain amount of culture exchange and even homogenization.

According to one ecclesiastical official:

¹³⁹ Probably a reference to an earlier settler of Vallegrande. A river in Vallegrande province is also named for him or his descendants.

¹⁴⁰ Restall, *The Black Middle*, 173-175.

The cattlemen who are Christians and others that are not are nearly indistinguishable from the heathen Indians, and do not much differ from them in political matters, nor in morality, or even in clothing materials, or resources or assistance in spiritual matters. They are situated in the countryside with their cattle at a distance of 30 or 40 leagues from the parish and receive no assistance, so they live, die and are buried in the same manner as the Chiriguano.¹⁴¹(My translation)

In this “middle ground” where no single group could consistently dominate another, Indians, individuals of mixed race, and even European settlers lived a life more oriented to village-level politics and identity than to the centers of Charcas. For much of the colonial period, individuals belonging to one or more of these groups fought against, negotiated with, and married each other, blurring the lines that separated Spaniard and African and Indian.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Saignes, 79.

¹⁴² Langer, 29. Here Langer borrows the term “middle ground” from Richard White’s *Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*.

Chapter 3: Pardos and the Foundation of La Ciudad de Jesús y Montesclaros de Los Caballeros.

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the easternmost outpost of the Audiencia of Charcas, stood for many things: it was one of the most isolated Spanish settlements in the Americas at the time of its foundation, and served to stake Spain's claim on much of the Amazon basin, another act in the competition between Spain and Portugal for new lands in the Americas. It was also the last stop for Spaniards pursuing the dream of sudden riches in cities like El Dorado and El Gran Paititi that were rumored to exist somewhere in the Amazonian jungle.¹⁴³ Once the city established itself in later years it became an important source of tropical agricultural goods, especially sugar, for the cities on the altiplano and highlands. After its initial foundation in 1561, and largely due to its extreme isolation from the rest of the Audiencia, its settlers moved the settlement westward several times. By the 1621 or 1622, Santa Cruz had essentially merged with the city of San Lorenzo de la Frontera, a city founded in 1590 to secure the connection between Santa Cruz and La Plata from Chiriguano attacks, described above. In time, San Lorenzo itself became known as Santa Cruz de la Sierra.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Langer, 35-36; Block, 162; Lo Cruceño, 20.

¹⁴⁴ Vázquez-Machicado, *Obras Completas*, 2:9; *Lo Cruceño*, 22; García Recio, 16.

lowlands, the highlands between Mizque and San Lorenzo continued to lie outside of the Audiencia's control. The single road that connected the highlands and lowlands, supposedly constructed in the days of the Inca Pachacuti Yupanqui, remained open to Chiriguano attack. The French naturalist Alcides D'Orbigny suggested that the distance between La Plata and San Lorenzo was about 120 leagues, a distance covered in about two weeks.¹⁴⁶ It is not completely clear what path travelers might have taken.¹⁴⁷ From Cochabamba, according to one Jesuit traveler in the seventeenth century, seconded by D'Orbigny in the early nineteenth, the road passed through three narrow valleys near Chilón and then followed the river that flowed eastward across three more valley systems until it climbed once more to Samaipata.¹⁴⁸ From Samaipata it took between three days and a week to reach San Lorenzo. Travelers headed from San Lorenzo to La Plata may have taken a different route, journeying south to the valley where Vallegrande was founded, then crossing the dangerous Rio Grande before heading south and west to La Plata.¹⁴⁹ The constant danger of Chiriguano attacks along these key crossing points between La Plata, San Lorenzo and Cochabamba made it imperative for the Audiencia to take further measures to control a region that lay essentially beyond Spanish colonial control.¹⁵⁰

In 1612, the Viceroy of Peru, Don Juan de Mendoza y Luna, responded to repeated requests from the Audiencia of Charcas to do something about the Chiriguano problem between La Plata and San Lorenzo and authorized Captain don Lucio de

¹⁴⁶ Depending upon the French league used (the *lieue de poste* or the *lieue de 3,000 pas*) a distance of between 290 and 363 miles. Chardon, 134-136, Table 144.

¹⁴⁷ D'Orbigny, 322, 325.

¹⁴⁸ Moxos, 140; D'Orbigny, 35-36.

¹⁴⁹ D'Orbigny, 322-326.

¹⁵⁰ Parajes Moreno, 85.

Escalante y Mendoza to found a town in the frontier region.¹⁵¹ Escalante was a part of what was the third generation of Spanish soldiers to come to Upper Peru to try and carve out his own personal fortune. He had taken part in the wars against the Dutch in the Spanish Netherlands and later took part in various actions from Panamá to Chile before retiring to La Plata. The now *maese de campo* Escalante agreed to take on the expedition to Vallegrande at his own expense in exchange for lands in the newly colonized region, the same formula that had been used by the earliest encomendero families in nearby Mizque two generations before.¹⁵²

Escalante's expedition was one of at least three military expeditions in the 1610s that were authorized by the viceroy to conquer sections of the Chiriguano frontier zone and settle the newly-opened lands. The second, which set out from La Plata in 1616, was led by Ruy Díaz de Guzmán into the Chiriguano territory near the Rio Grande. The expedition ended in defeat by 1619.¹⁵³ The last, which also set out in 1616, was led by Juan Porcel de Padilla into the Las Salinas valley southeast of Tarija where Porcel established at least one settlement called la Nueva Vega de Granada, later known as Las Torres.¹⁵⁴ Las Torres was also eventually abandoned in the face of Chiriguano attacks, although it survived as a fort for a number of years.

The three expeditions shared several features: all three were part of a brief resurgence of state-sanctioned military expeditions meant to expand the area under the effective control of the Audiencia of Charcas at the expense of the Chiriguano, and those who participated intended to also settle the lands they had conquered and benefit from

¹⁵¹ Sanabria, 18.

¹⁵² Ibid., 18, 30-31. Gutiérrez Brockington, 32.

¹⁵³ Díaz de Guzmán, 23; Garcia Recio, 114; Saignes, 60; Pifarré, 119-124.

¹⁵⁴ Saignes, 64; Mendoza, 120.

them economically.¹⁵⁵ While the Escalante expedition was linked to a push to subdue the Chiriguano at the regional level, an effort that largely ended in failure, it differed from the other two in that it was also supported by more local interests, mentioned above, that sought to articulate San Lorenzo and Santa Cruz de la Sierra with the rest of Charcas. Both the Díaz de Guzmán and Escalante expeditions set out from La Plata and passed through the Tomina frontier on the way to their respective destinations. Díaz advertised the coming expedition in Potosí, La Plata, and Tomina, and Escalante appears to have done the same, with the exception of Potosí. Porcel's expedition was based out of Tarija.

It is quite clear from the Diego de Mendoza account that black slaves participated in the foundation and defense of Porcel's town of Las Torres, a strategy similar to that pursued by Cazorla in 1584. These slaves appear to have been Las Torres' main residents for much of its short existence.¹⁵⁶ As will be discussed in greater detail below, Escalante's expedition also included a contingent of pardos, although it was a much more racially mixed group of conquistadors. It is more difficult to locate an African or afro-mestizo presence in Ruy Díaz's expedition, but if they were not present, then their absence would have been an exception to the majority of expeditions in that region at the time. We know from Pifarré that Díaz initially led a force of around 100 soldiers, but there is little mention of race in Díaz's account itself: his men are generally known as

¹⁵⁵ García Recio 105-113.

¹⁵⁶ El año de mil y seiscientos y diez y seis, siendo el Capitán Juan Porcel de Padilla, Corregidor de la villa de Tarija, por capitulaciones, que con su Majestad hizo, cuando fundó a su costo un pueblo en el valle de las Salinas, entre los Indios de guerra Chiriguanaes, a quien llamó el pueblo de las Torres, por haberle murado a su defensa de muchas torres: abiendo dibidido aquel partido por sus quibras, y valles, entre los Capitanes Españoles, que llevó consigo, porque de sus negros esclavos, que eran en cantidad, hizo presidio de el fuerte y fueron despues tan diestros en las armas de fuego, que por si solos sustentaron la guerra muchos años con los Indios enemigos. Mendoza, 120.

soldados.¹⁵⁷ Monsieur Ch. De Crozefon, who wrote an analysis of the Díaz manuscript that appeared in the 1979 reprint of the expedition account suggests that because Potosí was the first place that Díaz advertised in his expedition, we might interpret the “soldiers” described by Díaz to be some of the many mercenaries and wandering bands that filled the city of Potosí in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is tempting to connect such language to the discourse surrounding the mixed-race population in Potosí at the time.¹⁵⁸ But Díaz also advertised in the Tomina frontier region, which had a large black and mulatto population in the early seventeenth century. Escalante himself had acquired many of the *afromestizos* who accompanied him on his expedition to Vallegrande when he passed through the Tomina frontier only a couple years before.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, while plausible, the presence of *afromestizos* on the Díaz expedition is pure conjecture. Ruy Díaz de Guzmán, himself a *cuarterón* with a mix of Spanish and Guaraní ancestry that reflected his Paraguayan origins, generally preferred to avoid such fine distinctions of caste in his account.¹⁶⁰

The Díaz de Guzmán and Escalante expeditions were alike in another respect: they both included Guaraní-speaking mestizos with many years of military experience fighting the Chiriguano. Pedro López de Cavala and Diego Martínez de Irala, sons of Pedro de Segura Cavala, the founder of Tomina, accompanied their cousin, Ruy Díaz de Guzmán on his 1616 expedition.¹⁶¹ Like him, both men were descendants of the

¹⁵⁷ Pifarré, 120-121; He does refer to a small number of them as “españoles”, led by captain Joan Martinez de Yrala, who was almost certainly a mestizo or *cuarterón*, and a close relative of Ruy Díaz. Díaz de Guzmán, 86; Saignes, 59-63.

¹⁵⁸ Díaz de Guzmán, 58.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶⁰ Saignes, 62.

¹⁶¹ Garcia Recio, 101; Saignes, 60.

Paraguayan governor, Domingo Martínez de Irala, through his mestiza daughters. García de Mosquera, the son of a Spanish soldier and a Paraguayan Guaraní woman, and brother-in-law to Cavala and Irala, accompanied Escalante, although according to Saignes, he was 78 at the time. All of these individuals bear witness to the important role that settlers from the Rio de La Plata settlements, like Asunción in Paraguay, came to play in the conquest and settlement both of the eastern Andes and the tropical lowland plains. Mosquera had served as a sort of expert on the Chiriguano in La Plata, but as a mestizo he was socially marginalized at the capital. According to Saignes, he often took the position of interpreter or trafficker on expeditions and likely played a similar role in the Escalante expedition. In spite of his mestizo status, he was counted as a “vecino” in the expedition, and was not segregated from the Spaniards like the other “mulattos, zambos and mestizos” of the expedition.¹⁶²

The ability to communicate with the Chiriguano was key in both the Díaz de Guzmán and Escalante expeditions because both effectively played different Chiriguano groups against each other in exchange for security. This was clearest in the case of Díaz, who wrote an account of his expedition, although it was his failure to later follow through on his side of the bargain with his Chiriguano allies, and the evident interest in slave-trafficking on the part of some of his soldiers, that enabled the various Chiriguano bands involved to put aside their local grudges and drive Díaz back to Tomina.¹⁶³ According to Melgar, together with an interpreter (Mosquera?), Simón de Barrientos, the man who would become the *alcalde de aguas*, negotiated peace with the caciques of over 5,000

¹⁶² Saignes, 59-63; Sandoval, 21.

¹⁶³ García Recio, 114.

Chiriguano, who subsequently advised the settlers of the coming attack from another band. Four years later it appears even the former aggressors had come to them to make a deal, seemingly in exchange for official protection from a policy that sanctioned the enslavement of the Chiriguano because of their violent, persistent opposition to the expansion of Charcas.¹⁶⁴

By 1618, news of Díaz's beleaguered troop, and perhaps intelligence about some impending threat to the Escalante expedition, motivated the viceroy to attempt to pull back both expeditions. According to Melgar, in spite of the royal order, the Vallegrandinos decided to stay and continued to build their settlement.¹⁶⁵ A 1618 letter, cited in Melgar, goes so far as to defend the local Chiriguano groups, claiming that not only had they encountered no hostility or damage to property (cattle) at their hands, they had even protected a group of stranded travelers from starvation.¹⁶⁶ It may be that the

¹⁶⁴ “Se consiguió la paz i obediencia al rei i Escalante por los caciques de más de 5,000 indios, como aseguran el interprete i Simón de Barrientos que vino de la nación chiriguana i esclavería conservando la paz que se admitió en el real nombre, sin hacer daño en dicha jurisdicción. Los caciques avisaron del asalto que pretendían hacer otros indios, i que acudieron con gruesa soldadesca de esclavos, i al cabo de cuatro años volvieron a pedir seguridad de lo pactado a nombre de los demás, i que se les pasase provision del señor virrei o real audiencia de la Plata, en ratificación de ellas i para pasarse con sus mujeres y hijos a la parte i lugar que en la jurisdicción de esa ciudad se les señalese como constó de la declaración que hicieron Jerónimo Mejía, en presencia de todo el pueblo con cuyo aviso i publicación se despachó al procurador general Francisco Tordecillas Parado i Juan de Artalejo, que el Julio 1618, hace oficio de alcalde ordinario i otras personas i así mismo ha resultado la pacificación de los indios Yuracarés i otros effectos.” Melgar, 22.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶⁶ “En 1618 los habitantes de Jesús de Valle Grande dicen: ‘hai que considerar que se hizo la población sin pago de soldados, armas ni pertrechos, caballos ni bastimientos, ni indios, ni ayuda forzoza del erario, su alteza debe considerar, que sin ser de los firmados i obligado a poblar estas fronteras, lo han hecho, asistiendo en los peligros que en sus principios pudieron correr, a la defensa i población cinco años menos dos meses, (luego fue mayo 1613,) los más de los vecinos que aquí están, hai necesidad de ser socorridas estas fronteras, no pudiéndose con gente pagada se puede ocurrir a los delincuentes de las cárceles. Aunque los indios fueron convocadas, hasta hoy no han hecho daño en esta frontera, en gentes, ganados ni población i es posible apartarlos de sus malos intentos si les envían real provisión i perdón general por medio de Escalante. Se debe a esta población no hayan perecido algunos pasajeros de hambre, en 1617 se socorrió de esta ciudad a la dormida de Zaguaypata i otras partes donde estuvieron detenidos muchos días por las lluvias más de 40 personas i unas gentes de servicio a quienes se les socorrió con bastimientos i soldados para traerlos por el camino nuevamente abierto a esta ciudad ...’ En 1618 el Virei escribió al Rei dando cuenta de la población de Don Pedro de Escalante, i de lo que se ha proveído.” Ibid., 22.

business that sent Escalante back to La Plata, where he suddenly died in 1620, had to do with securing the rights of the settlers to stay in the region, and perhaps even to elicit some official protection of their indigenous allies from slave traffickers.

In the various representations that exist of Vallegrande's founders, they are either perceived as noble Spaniards or runaway African slaves. An examination of the available materials suggests that the members of Escalante's expedition were a racially diverse group, reflecting much of the racial and social complexity of Charcas in the early seventeenth century: The peninsular Spaniard and soldier Escalante, a number of older European immigrants and/or Spanish criollos with families, the Paraguayan mestizo García de Mosquera, the pardo Domingo de Robles, the free black Juan Martín, and the unnamed Indian servants, pardo militiamen, and indigenous allies.

When the members of the Escalante expedition decided to ignore the royal order and stay in their settlement in 1618, they defended their actions by providing a list of the names of the settlers to demonstrate that the community was thriving, and well on its way to completing the improvements required of them in the royal cédula. The list included ninety Spaniards and criollos, and another forty individuals, mulattos, zambos, and free blacks, who lived segregated from the rest of the group. Their petition was successful, and the audiencia withdrew its order to retreat.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ "Para comprobar que la ciudad de Jesus, en pocos años estaba ya bastante poblada acompañaron una nómina de vecinos, que entre españoles y criollos llegaba a más de noventa personas, y entre zambos, mulatos y negros libres que vivían en barrio separado, pasaban de cuarenta." Sandóval, 24); The following is the list of founders that appears in Sandóval's book: Don Pedro Lucio de Escalante y Mendoza, Fundador y Justicia Mayor; Licenciado don Andrés Fernández del Campo, primer Cura Vicario; Capitán Jerónimo Vélez de Guebara, Alférez Real y Alcalde Ordinario, con cuatro hijos; don Juan de Cartalejo, Alcalde Ordinario; Francisco Díaz Verjano, Regidor, con dos hijas, una de ellas casada con Juan Bautista de Soria; Simón de Barrientos, Alcalde de Aguas, con doce hijos e hijas (algunos casados); Diego Fernández Sequiera, Alguacil Mayor, con cinco hijos varones y gente de servicio, Alonso Fernández de Tovar, Depositario General y Regidor Jerónimo Gómez de Talavera, Receptor de Penas de Cámara, con

Although the apparent leader of this segregated group, we know more about Captain Domingo de Robles than most of the other members of the expedition. We encountered him already in Ruy Díaz de Guzmán's account of the history of the Chiriguano as a landowner with property in the Tomina frontier that suffered an attack by Chiriguano soldiers in 1598. In the historian Hernando Sanabria Fernández's note on Robles he describes him as a pardo (although Sanabria interprets this to mean 'mestizo').¹⁶⁸ According to Sanabria, Escalante met up with Robles as he passed through Tomina frontier on his way to what would become Vallegrande and convinced Robles to come with him. Robles then served as the captain of a militia he himself formed, made up, according to Sanabria, by other pardos who were servants in his household. It may be, then, that all of the zambos, mulattos and mestizos described in a separate list were connected in some way to Domingo de Robles. When the list of founders was drawn up, Robles had eight children and commanded "the fort of the free pardos", manned by a militia of thirteen armed men. Robles' name turns up again in the historical record years later, near Mizque in 1640s. Robles had passed away by that time, but left his wife, Bartola de Uminchipa, in control of his properties in the region. Bartola, Domingo's second wife, was not a parda, but an Indian woman, once a yanacona connected to a

una hija; Esteban Carátis, Regidor, con tres piezas de servicio; Pedro Gómez de Pastrána, Escribano de Cabildo; Pedro de Castillo, con seis piezas de servicio; Miguel Nuñez Lorenzo, casado; Pedro de la Reinaga, casado, con dos hijos y diez piezas de servicio; Francisco de Mendoza, casado, con tres hijos; doña Ana de Zarate, casada, con cuatro hijos y seis piezas de servicio; Pedro Fernández de Santiago, Juan López, casado; Luis de Vargas, casado con tres hijos; Francisco Gallardo, casado; Capitán García de Mosquera, con un hijo y cuatro piezas de servicio. Entre zambos y mulatos y mestizos figuran los siguientes: Domingo de Dobles [Dobles should be Robles in all of the following] con ocho hijos y trece pardos de armas tomar; Pedro Fernández, con un hijo; Pedro Sánchez, con tres hijos, Diego de Dobles, con un hijo; Juan Nuñez, con un hijo; Salvador García, (finado) casado con Catalina Dobles, un hijo y una nieta con un hijo; Juan Martín, negro libre, casado, que entre hijos, nueras, indios e indias de servicio contaba veinte personas." Sandóval, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Díaz de Guzmán, 165.

Spanish settler living in the town of San Juan de Rodas, near where we first encounter Domingo in Ruy Díaz's account. One of Bartola's neighbors, a landowner "of the pardo color" named Juan de Robles, was also a militia captain.¹⁶⁹

The Robles surname was common in the mixed-race segment of Vallegrande's founder population. Diego de Robles was accompanied by one of his children, and Catalina Robles, married to Salvador García (deceased), brought along several generations of her family, a child, and a grandchild who also brought a child. Catalina turns up again in 1615 as one of the individuals who received land in the newly conquered and settled town of Comarapa, called Santa María de la Guardia y Mendoza in its early days.¹⁷⁰ It seems likely that all of these individuals were members of the same extended family. However, although they were socially segregated from the Spanish founder population in the region's early days, they may have been property owners even before they came to Vallegrande, and were able to acquire property in the newly conquered region as well.

While several other men from the "zambo, mulatto and mestizo" group are named, we know nothing about them. One man, Juan Martín, is described as a free black, the only person listed by both their name and *calidad*. Martín may have once been a slave in the Tomina area as well, perhaps belonging to the same Captain Martín who had attempted to carve out a property for himself in the Tomina frontier in the early 1580s when he was attacked and killed, and his property, including a number of slaves, was captured by the Chiriguano. Although segregated from the Spanish population of the

¹⁶⁹ Gutiérrez Brockington, 174; Díaz de Guzmán, 163.

¹⁷⁰ Melgar, 26, 27.

settlement, Juan Martín, an older man at this time, like many in the party, was a man of some means. He brought not only a number of his children and their spouses, but also yanacona servants of his own.

Although free, as a landowner of African descent in the frontier zone, Juan Martín recalls the career of Juan Valiente. Valiente was an African slave who initially lived with his master, Alonso Valiente, in the newly founded Mexican city of Puebla from 1530 to 1533 before receiving his master's permission to join one of the departing expeditions of conquest and discovery, agreeing to turn over both his person and his earnings to his master in four years' time. In 1533, Valiente went first with Pedro de Alvarado on his expedition to Peru, and then continued on with Diego de Almagro, eventually participating in the conquest of Chile. Valiente took part in the foundation of Valdivia in 1546, and over the course of his career received both an estate outside of Santiago and an encomienda of his own. Valiente had begun the process of purchasing his freedom from his master in the early 1550s, but died in the 1553 battle of Tucapel before he had been able to do so.¹⁷¹ Over the course of their careers, Africans like Martín and Valiente, and afroestizos like Robles, demonstrated the possibilities available to socially marginal individuals in Spanish frontier society. It is unclear if Valiente left any descendants in Chile, but Robles, and probably Martín, established themselves and their children in the region. Robles endowed a chapel near the fort of the free pardos, near the modern town of Guadalupe, and several of his children married into local families in the region. The captains Diego, Lucas and José Robles that appear in this study could very well be his descendants, continuing a long family tradition of military service and landownership.

¹⁷¹Restall, *Seven Myths*, 53-54.

The problem of describing their racial and social status in the community as persons of mixed race and probable African descent occupies part of the next section.

The presence of mixed-race individuals in the vanguard of colonial colonization efforts was to some extent the result of a colonial policy that sought to attract socially marginal elements of colonial society to the frontier. In the conquest and settlement of Vallegrande, evidence of official encouragement of such individuals is clear from a section of the *cédula* authorizing the creation of the Vallegrande settlement:

Likewise, I permit and concede that, with evidence that eight months have passed since you began the settlement, that the people who would like to go there, be they Spaniards, mestizos, free mulattos, sambahijos [zambos] who have committed crimes, in the absence of any party that might accuse them, the laws do not impede them from going in your company to form and continue the settlement, and they cannot be punished, by them, by said laws and judges of your majesty.”¹⁷² (My translation)

While many of the elements of the 1612 *cédula* crib entire sections from the *Ordenanzas sobre descubrimientos nuevos y población*, written by King Phillip II in 1573, the piece above was probably written expressly for the Escalante expedition. The central problem that the ordinance attempts to confront is the potential scarcity of suitable colonizers for the frontier settlement. Phillip’s original *Ordenanzas* deal with this problem in general by lowering the bar on the number of suitable colonizers. While new towns in both Phillip’s *Ordenanzas* and in the Escalante *cédula* are supposed to include at least thirty residents or *vecinos*, Phillip’s version states that twelve men might be enough to warrant authorization, though, perhaps out of concern for the sustainability of the

¹⁷² “Ansimesmo os permito y concedo que, con testimonio de que an pasado ocho meses que empesastes la población, que la gente que quisiere ir á ella, ora sean españoles, mestisos, mulatos libres y sambahijos que hayan cometido delitos, no auiendo partes que les acusen, las justicias no les impidan a ir en vuestra compañía á hacer y continuar la poblacion y no puedan ser castigados, por ellos, por las dichas justicias y jueses de su magestad.” Sandóval, 41.

settlement, at least ten of the settlers had to be married.¹⁷³ The ordinance above from the Escalante cédula makes no mention of the civil status of the colonizers; instead it opens the door to settlers whom the colonial state would consider to have criminal backgrounds, and even includes a promise to protect them from future prosecution. What's more, it is very upfront about the fact that the *calidad* of the settler would not be a limiting factor. The strong connection between mixed-race and perceived criminality recalls official discourse from the time. Perhaps the language of this ordinance, and its willingness to include socially marginal colonizers in the frontier settlement, was seen by Viceroy Mendoza as one way to mobilize the floating population described above, transforming them into settlers or tenants on rural estates, something akin to the *reducciones* mentioned in the official correspondence of the time.

The 1618 letter to the audiencia requesting permission to continue the settlement process also suggests a willingness to open the door to socially marginal individuals:

You must consider that the settlement was accomplished without payment in soldiers, arms or munitions, horses or supplies, neither with Indians, nor by resorting to the treasury. Your highness should consider that the majority of vecinos who are here, although not among those sworn and charged with settling this frontier, have done so, taking part in all the dangers that were possible in the beginning, in the defense and settlement over the past five years minus two months This frontier being in need of assistance, and in the absence of paid people it can be accomplished with delinquents from the jails.¹⁷⁴ (My translation)

Here the implication is that the majority of the residents in Vallegrande at the time were probably not those who could claim to be *hijosdalgos* in Vallegrande's social

¹⁷³ Mundigo and Crouch, 253, 262.

¹⁷⁴ "...hai que considerar que se hizo la población sin pago de soldados, armas ni pertrechos, caballos ni bastamentos, ni indios, ni ayuda forzoza del erario, su alteza debe considerar, que sin ser de los firmados i obligados a poblar estas fronteras, lo han hecho, asistiendo en los peligros que en sus principios pudieron correr, a la defensa i población cinco años menos dos meses Los más de los vecinos que aquí están, hai necesidad de ser socorridas estas fronteras, no pudiéndose con gente pagada se puede ocurrir a los delincuentes de las cárceles." Melgar, 22.

hierarchy. These individuals were either disqualified by their *calidad*, or had come after the settlement had been established, probably motivated by news that the settlement might be a good place to begin a new life, no questions asked. The 1618 letter even seeks to encourage more such persons to join the settlement given the fact that more acceptable settlers could not even be paid to come there. While this must certainly have been an inducement for *afromestizos* living in the urban centers of Charcas and on its many haciendas, it must certainly have encouraged others as well.

Unlike Porcel's short-lived Las Torres fort, or the more successful community of San Agustín de la Emboscada in Paraguay a century later, Vallegrande was not principally a black *reduccion*; the heterogeneity of its founding population, and its continued racial diversity are evidence enough of the difference.¹⁷⁵ The use of frontier settlements in eastern Charcas as sinks for colonial society's socially marginal individuals was a fairly common practice: Garcia Recio claims that this was the case for the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, located within the same militarized frontier as Vallegrande, and far off Tucumán.¹⁷⁶ There are even examples of the banishment to Santa Cruz for the defendants in Inquisition cases, supporting local claims that many of the original settlers of Vallegrande and Santa Cruz were *conversos*.¹⁷⁷ But the language of the Vallegrande *cédula* seems unique both in its protection of individuals with criminal backgrounds or other social impediments, and in its efforts to reach out to the *casta* community and free blacks in particular. Whether it was because of this official strategy

¹⁷⁵ Granda, "Origen, Funcion y Estructura de un Pueblo de Negros y Mulatos Libres en el Paraguay de Siglo XVIII (San Agustín de la Emboscada)."

¹⁷⁶ García Recio, 422-423.

¹⁷⁷ For the most current discussion of this subject and its bibliography see Francisco Roig and David Reichsfeld, "Santa Cruz de la Sierra y su legado judío colonial," *Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales*.

or some other means, at least one third of Escalante's expedition was made up of blacks, mestizos and afromestizos, not to mention unnamed and uncounted future colonizers.

Although the pardo militiamen and their captain are probably not the caballeros pardos envisioned by Viedma, they certainly recall the narrative he constructed. Blacks and castas did protect the new settlement from Chiriguano attacks, participated in founding new settlements, and labored in or even owned the estancias that formed in the newly conquered territory.

Chapter 4: Race in Late Colonial Vallegrande

In Viedma's interpretation of Vallegrande's foundation narrative, he took the term *caballeros pardos* to be a reference to fugitive slaves from rural haciendas in nearby Mizque. He understood the term to be a reference to race in general and to African ancestry in particular. Although he considered it conjecture, the founding generation of *caballeros pardos* that he constructed to explain Vallegrande's past drew upon an image of Vallegrandino society in the 1780s that he constructed from his census data for the region. Whether his evidence for this belief was based upon direct observation of the population of the region or merely the results of his census is difficult to say, although his comments throughout his report appear to be those of a person who has personally experienced each city and hamlet, each abandoned watermill and dry creek bed.

Local Vallegrandino literary discourse challenges Viedma's construction of the past, and his interpretation of the word *pardo* on two fronts. The first is to deny that the term *pardo* was used to any great extent to describe the race of colonial Vallegrandinos. The second appears to accept the descriptive value of the term, but claims that the term was meant to reference something other than African ancestry. In this struggle to control the narrative of Vallegrande's foundation story, both positions challenge Viedma's reading of the evidence—the society he claimed to have observed in late colonial Vallegrande. In an effort to address each of these questions, this study draws upon evidence available in Vallegrande's parish record, with particular emphasis upon the last third of the eighteenth century, when Viedma's visit to the region took place. Parish records are not the only source available by which to explore the theme of race in Vallegrande, but they are readily accessible to the researcher, were fairly systematically

collected by parish priests and their assistants, and were essentially the site where state or ecclesiastical bureaucrats assigned individuals to a specific racial category based upon a supposedly universal racial rubric called the *sistema de castas*. The reliability of the *sistema de castas* as a means of understanding racial identity has been extensively debated by colonial scholars, much of the debate surrounding the uncertain relationship between race and class, the ambiguous meaning of the racial categories themselves, and the highly localized application of racial categories.¹⁷⁸ The term pardo is itself problematic because it was not a true racial category according to the *sistema de castas* in the same way that terms like mulatto and mestizo supposedly were, and it is also a color, raising the possibility that it was more of a descriptive term than a particularly racial one.¹⁷⁹ In spite of its ambiguity, the term pardo was extensively used in many places in colonial Latin America, and Vallegrande is no exception.¹⁸⁰ Thus the assertion of some Vallegrandino scholars is that the term had a very particular, local meaning that was different than the term's usage elsewhere in the region and in Latin America in general.

This study will respond to questions surrounding the meaning of the term pardo and the extent of its application in Vallegrande by exploring the parish data on two levels.¹⁸¹ The first level of analysis will address the racial demography question by quantifying aggregate *calidad* information for selected years and identifying trends across a number of years. The second will address the meaning of racial categories used in the parish record, and how persons of different racial categories interacted with each other by

¹⁷⁸ Restall, *The Black Middle*, 96-97; Jackson, 9-11.

¹⁷⁹ Vinson, 200-201, 239 n.2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸¹ All microfilm copies from the holdings of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints History Library in Salt Lake City were viewed at the San Diego Family History Center (LDS-SD), San Diego, CA. Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Register.

exploring themes of exogamous marriage, observed inconsistencies in the application of racial categories, and information about the padrino, or godparent system. The results reveal both a shift in the frequency of the application of certain racial categories over time and a great deal of uncertainty and inconsistency regarding just how to categorize individuals by race in a society where extensive racial mixing had taken place between persons of European, African, and Indigenous ancestry over a long period of time.

General Trends

Vallegrande's earliest surviving baptismal records date to the 1680s. For the purpose of this study I sampled baptismal records from 1689-1696, 1711-1712, 1771, 1790-1791, and 1825. I focused particularly upon the data from 1771 and 1790-1791 because they encompass the period during which Francisco Viedma visited the region, lending the study a certain amount of comparative value. Here the twenty-year gap is meant to signify a single generation of Vallegrandino baptisms. The other selected dates are meant to put the trends identified into a broader historical context given the data available, including both the earliest available data, and data from the last year of the wars of independence when *calidad* information begins to be less-consistently collected.

While the broad outlines of the information captured within the baptismal records tended to remain the same throughout the period surveyed, entries varied over time in their detail and precision. Priests faithfully recorded such information as the names of parents, the name and gender of the child baptized, the child's age and legitimacy, and the name of the child's padrino. Other information was quite variable: *calidad* information was sometimes omitted for long periods and sometimes faithfully recorded.

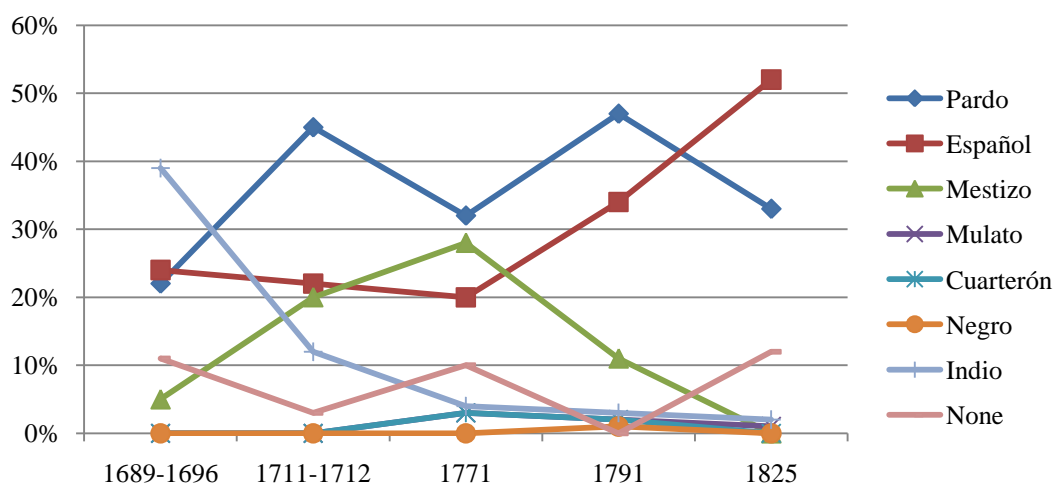
Parents might be defined by the same racial categories, or placed in separate categories as in the case of mixed marriages. The family's residence was sometimes listed, sometimes not. Priests sometimes observed the *calidad* of the padrinos, whether they lived in the same community as the family of their compadres, and even padrinos' parents' names and home communities. Usually the officiating priest signed the document and listed himself as the officiator of the baptism, but even this critical step was sometimes omitted. As a general rule, baptismal records acquired their highest level of detail and precision during the last two decades of the eighteenth century.

The geographic area that fell under the jurisdiction of Vallegrande's parish priests changed over time, growing smaller as different sections of the curato acquired their own baptismal ledgers. By the 1760s, information about Vallegrande's parishioners was being captured in three different ledgers, one for Vallegrande itself, and two more for the *viceparroquias* of Pampagrande and Pucará to the north and south.¹⁸² As I only sampled records from Vallegrande's ledger, the area included in this sample became increasingly limited to Vallegrande's central core and associated highlands and valleys. The region was also predominantly rural. An 1822 census of the region listed the urban population of Vallegrande at 832, Pampagrande at 159, and Pucará at 182 persons out of a regional population of 6,889, or only 17 percent of the total. Viedma's report lists the population of Vallegrande at the time of his visit as 8,427, twenty years before the violence of the wars of independence, but it seems likely that the percentage of urban and rural residents was similar at the time of his visit, with the vast majority scattered among the many

¹⁸² Melgar, 42-43.

estancias and haciendas that dotted the region. Thus, my references to Vallegrande are references to a region and a rural environment, and only rarely to a city and urban center.

Chart 4: General Findings by Calidad Category, 1689-1825



Pardos were an important segment of the population of Vallegrande in all of the baptismal records sampled between 1689 and 1825. In the seventy-six legible baptismal records that included race information between 1689 and 1696, shortly after the bishop from Santa Cruz described the community as Vallegrande de los Mulatos, pardos made up only 22 percent of the entries. In this sample, *indios* represented 39 percent of the total, although many of those baptized were adults or older children.¹⁸³ *Españoles* made up 24 percent of the total, and *mestizos* made up only five percent of total baptisms.

¹⁸³ In this particular date range, indios make up the largest single racial group, 39 percent of the total, making their presence in the baptismal record far greater than at any other point during the sample period (1689-1825). The large proportion of indios in relation to other racial groups during this early period is partially explained by the fact that at least a third of them were adults or older children. These individuals are frequently described both as “indios de la cordillera,” a reference to the Chiriguano frontier zone, and “del servicio”, essentially slaves serving in the houses and chacras of Vallegrandino families. Their presence bears witness to the common practice of Indian slavery in the eastern Andes at that time, either of Chiriguano captured in military skirmishes, or by Spanish slave-raiding parties, or other indigenous groups captured in the same manner. Conversely, indigenous slaves may also have been sold to Vallegrandino hacendados by the Chiriguano themselves, for whom the slave trade was big business. Indigenous servants appear quite frequently in Vallegrandino parish records during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Saignes, 41; Block 176, 177-181.

About 11 percent of the individuals baptized were not assigned to any racial category. This small sample certainly suggests that Vallegrande was a sparsely populated region at the time. It also appears that Vallegrande's parish priest made only periodical visits to the region.¹⁸⁴ Many of the baptisms are dated to the same day and are then separated by large gaps in time: at one point the baptismal record jumps from April 17th to December 25th. There were several occasions where entire households and their servants are listed together, predominantly Spanish households with indigenous servants, suggesting perhaps somewhat limited or preferential access to the visiting priest.¹⁸⁵

The seventy-six legible baptisms that included race data from 1711 and 1712 also demonstrate infrequent visits from priests: the baptismal record jumps from April 9 to November 1 before settling in for several months. The relative proportions are quite different however: pardos make up 45 percent of the total, or 33 cases, españoles are 22 percent of the total or 16 cases, mestizos make up 20 percent of the total or 15 cases, and indios are 12 percent of the total at 9 cases. These baptismal records also mention whether the child baptized was legitimate or illegitimate. In the three largest groups, more than three-quarters of children were considered legitimate, which continued to be the norm for the region throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁶

In the 200 baptisms counted during 1771, pardos were 32 percent of the total, represented by 64 cases, and cuarterones, mulatos and pardos together made up 38 percent, or 76 cases. Twenty-eight percent, 56 cases, were mestizos, and españoles were 20 percent of the total or 40 cases. Indios were the smallest group at 4 percent. For about

¹⁸⁴ It is also possible that the local priest wrote down baptismal information elsewhere and transcribed this information into the official ledger at a later time.

¹⁸⁵ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1689-1696.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1711-1712. Six of the nine indios listed were born out of wedlock.

10 percent of the total no race information was recorded. Legitimate births in this much larger sample were nearly the same as in the sample from 1711-12, hovering between 65 and 70 percent of births for the three largest groups. The sample is obviously much larger than in 1711, suggesting that the population had grown, in spite of the fact that by this time the viceparroquias of Pampagrande and Pucará had begun to collect parish information for their surrounding districts in separate ledgers.¹⁸⁷

In 1791, of the 256 cases recorded, pardos represented 47 percent, 120 cases, and pardos, mulatos, cuarterones and negros esclavos together made up 51 percent of the total. Españoles were 34 percent, mestizos were 11 percent, and indios were 3 percent. The numbers for españoles and indios match up very well with Viedma's 1786 census, although in his census, mulattos were only 38 percent and mestizos were 23 percent of the total (See Chart 1). The differences in racial demography between the census and the baptismal record suggest that either the parish data was not particularly representative of the local population, or that the two sources utilized different racial categorization methods. The legitimacy rates for españoles and pardos were identical, 70 percent, and mestizos were only slightly lower at 65 percent.¹⁸⁸

Finally, in 1825, out of 354 cases, pardos represented 33 percent of the total, or 118 baptisms, and españoles represented 54 percent of all baptisms, 183 in total, their highest proportion of the total during the sample period. There was not a single mestizo baptism that year, and only a total of 2 mulattoes, 1 slave, and 7 indios. Twelve percent were not assigned a *calidad* of any sort, a similar proportion to that of 1771. Bolivia

¹⁸⁷ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1771. Aguilar Peña, 29.

¹⁸⁸ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1791.

became an independent nation in 1825, and this date also represents a watershed moment for data collection in the parish record: beginning in 1826, fewer and fewer individuals are assigned to racial categories. By 1827 there is almost no mention of race in Vallegrande's baptismal record whatsoever.¹⁸⁹

Taken together, the sample data from Vallegrande's baptismal record reveals several key trends regarding the racial categories into which local priests organized the local population. After beginning the sample period as a major category, indios quickly fell below 10 percent of the total by the mid-eighteenth century, and continued to decline thereafter. The mestizo category fluctuated between 11 and 3 percent for much of the sample period, before disappearing almost entirely by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Other mixed race categories like mulatto and cuarterón, and the category for negros appeared only infrequently in the baptismal record. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the pardo and español categories emerged as the primary racial categories into which Vallegrandinos were organized. Later, the pardo category continued to represent a third or more of all baptisms, while the español category climbed steeply to represent more than half of all baptisms by 1825.

The rapid decline and negligible presence of the indigenous population as well as the disappearance of the mestizo category are significant because they stand in stark contrast to demographic trends in neighboring regions. Viedma's census certainly reveals how much the partido of Vallegrande's tiny indigenous population contrasted with the rest of the intendancy. The indigenous populations in neighboring Mizque and Santa Cruz constituted 43 percent and 53 percent of the population of each partido, whereas the

¹⁸⁹ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1825-1827.

indigenous population in Vallegrande represented only 2 percent of the region.¹⁹⁰ A look at the Vallegrande curato also shows the inverted relationship between the mestizo and mulatto categories in the census, which makes it different not only from other partidos, but from the other curatos within the Vallegrande region. As we have already seen, the reasons for Vallegrande's unique demography were rooted in its history, especially the small size of its indigenous population.

A Mixed Society

The assertion that the racial category pardo was not associated with African ancestry in Vallegrande suggests that the term had a highly localized meaning that was quite different from how the term was used in adjoining regions of Charcas and other parts of Latin America at the time. According to local scholars, the terms mestizo and pardo are identical.¹⁹¹ However, with few exceptions, historians of Latin America conceive of pardos as persons of African descent. Several scholars have suggested that the term was a euphemism for the term mulatto, and have noted that racially-mixed persons of African descent often preferred to use the term pardo rather than mulatto to describe their race, or somewhat tangentially to refer to their skin color (*de color pardo*).¹⁹² One notable exception, a study of Northern Mexico, suggests that the term mulatto was used in the same manner as the term mestizo, to refer to a person with both Spanish and indigenous ancestors.¹⁹³ In this case the historian, Ramón Gutiérrez, supports

¹⁹⁰ The numbers in Santa Cruz are bit misleading in that they included the populations of the partido's indigenous missions. See the difference between the demography of the curato of Santa Cruz, which included only the city of San Lorenzo and several neighboring villages, and that of the larger partido, which also included the missions. Special thanks to Francisco Roig for calling this to my attention.

¹⁹¹ *Reflejos*, 2 Abril 1925, 2.

¹⁹² Restall, *The Black Middle*, 99; Vinson, 200.

¹⁹³ Gutiérrez, 196.

his claim by pointing first to the lack of local evidence of anyone of African ancestry, and then to the term's particular usage by parish priests. Gutiérrez demonstrates how one priest in New Mexico described the people in his parish as "*indios mulatos*", which he feels is a clear reference to an alternate meaning for mulatto.¹⁹⁴

In Vallegrande, the presence of African slaves in adjoining regions since at least the mid-sixteenth century and in Vallegrande itself since at least the 1730s, and the participation of free blacks and other persons of African descent in the conquest and settlement of the region that became Vallegrande are evidence enough that blacks and their descendants were actors in Vallegrandino colonial society since its inception. The additional presence of free blacks from Brazil in Vallegrande toward the end of the eighteenth century must also have contributed to this founder population.¹⁹⁵ Usage of the term *pardo* in the parish record also demonstrates this connection to African ancestry, although rarely. Slaves are described as either black or mulatto in Vallegrande's parish records, however there are at least two instances where female slaves were referred to as *pardas esclavas*, or pardo slaves. The first was Josepha Cuellar, who belonged to doña Rita Cuellar, and who baptized her bastard son Jose Pio Quinto (presumably named for Pope Pius V) in 1793. The second was Josepha Ripalda, who may have belonged to the local priest Blas José de Ripalda y Menacho, who appears as lieutenant vicar many times in Vallegrande's parish record in the 1770s and 80s. At her death in 1785, Josepha is

¹⁹⁴ Gutiérrez, 196.

¹⁹⁵ At least one Afro-Brazilian appears in Vallegrande's baptismal record: in December of 1793, Francisco Cabo Verde, a free black "del reino de Portugal" buried his son Pedro Cabo Verde in Vallegrande. Perhaps the presence of these individuals contributed to Viedma's speculations about Vallegrande's origins. Such individuals appear to have been sheltered from Brazilian authorities in Santa Cruz. Viedma specifically mentions the presence of Afro-Brazilians in San Lorenzo in his report, alluding to their contribution to sugar cane production in the region. Probably a large number of the 150 blacks living the curato of Santa Cruz were Afro-Brazilians who had escaped from Brazil. Viedma, 112-113, 121.

referred to by then vicar Bernardo Herbas as a *parda esclava*. The fact that it was possible to be both *pardo* and *esclavo* in Vallegrande certainly supports the argument that the term *pardo* suggested at least some African ancestry for those who bore the term, a fact which connects Vallegrande's data to other studies of slavery and miscegenation in Spanish America.

There was also connection between the terms *pardo* and *mulatto* in Vallegrande's parish record. In November of the same year that Josepha Ripalda died, Bernardo Herbas baptized a one-year-old slave named Eugenia Ripalda. Herbas recorded the child's mother as Josepha Ripalda, *mulata esclava*; the child's father was unknown. Given the small size of Vallegrande's slave community, the two Josepha Ripaldas were probably the same person; perhaps Josepha died in childbirth with Eugenia, or from complications later on. The use of *pardo* in one instance and *mulatto* in another for the same individual may suggest that the terms were interchangeable. In another instance, local priests described two children from the same family as *pardos* at their baptism, and another sibling as a *mulatto*.¹⁹⁶ But there is another possibility: perhaps Herbas' classification of Josepha Ripalda as a *parda* at her death was meant to honor the dead slave, while the reference to both mother and daughter as *mulattos* in the baptismal record was meant to reaffirm what the priest conceived to be some kind of boundary between the two terms. There is some local evidence that the term *pardo* was conceived of as a level of miscegenation beyond that of *mulatto*. In 1744 a *parda* named Andrea Barrancos married a local man named Vicente Ensinas. The *calidad* of Andrea's husband and his family was not mentioned, and while Andrea's mother's *calidad* was also omitted, the priest noted

¹⁹⁶ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1772, 1775, and 1777.

that Andrea's father, Pedro Barrancos, was a mulatto. While the socioracial implications of the term pardo, and its relation to other terms for persons of mixed ancestry merit further analysis, it is at least safe to say the meaning of the term pardo is incoherent without first acknowledging the perception of partial African ancestry associated with the term.

Racial Categories and the Problem of Exogamous Marriage

While Vallegrande's general population trends yield important findings about the region's racial demography, they perpetuate the illusion that racial boundaries were fixed, and that individuals were placed into them in a predictable manner. In such a scenario, those placed in the español, negro, and indio categories did not possess ancestors from any of the other groups. In reality, although the majority of unions in Vallegrande were described as existing between persons of the same caste, mixed-race unions did occur in Vallegrande and were recorded frequently enough to yield important information about how race functioned in Vallegrande. According to the calculus of the *sistema de castas*, children who were born of mixed marriages received racial identities that referenced their particular proportion of European, Indigenous, or African ancestry.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ According to Alberto Crespo in *Esclavos Negros en Bolivia*, the terms pertaining to persons of African descent were as follows: black and white, mulatto; white and mulatto, cuarterón; white and cuarterón, quinterón; white and quinterón, white; black and Indian, chino; white and mulatto, zambo; black and zambo, zambo prieto [negro]; black and zambo prieto, black; and black and chino, zambo. Even this seemingly ironclad list does not exhaust all of the possible race combinations and terms available in the Spanish Americas. Crespo, 40. To the modern ear, *chino* makes little sense as a race term describing the progeny of a mixed white/Indian person. I am uncertain of the word's origin, but in Aymara, *chinu* means a knot, or something tied together. See Manuel De Lucca's *Diccionario Aymara-Castellano, Castellano-Aymara*, 101; That said, I also encountered the term in Matthew Restall's recent book, *The Black Middle*, for a study of a very different region with different linguistic influences; See, for example, Robert Jackson's table on racial terms employed in the Sonora, Mexico in Jackson, 116.

Chart 5: Mixed-Race Families and the Race Category of Their Children

Father's <i>Calidad</i>	Mother's <i>Calidad</i>	Child's <i>Calidad</i>			
		Same as Father's		Same as Mother's	
Español	Cuarterón	Español	1	cuarterón	0
Español	Mestiza	Español	6	mestizo	0
Español	Parda	Español	3	Pardo	6
Español	India	Mestizo	1	esp/ind	0
Mestizo	Parda	Mestizo	0	Pardo	1
Indio	Española	Indio	0*	español	0*
Indio	Parda	Indio	0	Pardo	1
Indio	Mulata	Indio	1	mulata	0
Indio	Mestiza	Indio	1	mestizo	0
Pardo	española	Pardo	16	español	2
Pardo	Mestiza	Pardo	7	mestizo	0
Pardo	India	Pardo	1	Indio	0
Mulato	española	Mulato	1	español	0

*2 children recorded as mestizos did not receive either parent's *calidad*

Source: Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1791-1792

Just as baptismal information for 1791-92 included more detail than any of the other years sampled, it also included the most data about mixed-race partners and their children. The vast majority of parents who baptized their children in 1791 were either from the same race group or were single mothers, but in September of that year the priests began to note mixed race couples as well. In the roughly 100 cases between the

end of September and the end of the year, there were 17 mixed-race couples, or 17 percent of the total. I then continued to count such cases until the end of October of 1792 in order to have at least 50 examples of mixed race couples and their children, which suggests that about 15 percent of children baptized in Vallegrande were recorded as being from mixed-race households. This does not give us the actual number of such children in the community, but only those described as such by the priests present during this particular time period. What these cases provide is a glimpse into how the caste system functioned in Vallegrande at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁸

Exogamous marriages presented local priests with the problem of how to classify the children of these unions. Part of their solution was to avoid assigning these children to a racial category that was different than either parent's, and instead to assign mixed-race children to the caste of one parent or the other. This still left the priests with the choice of one caste or the other, but in this sample, priests appeared to further simplify this problem by simply assigning the children of mixed-race marriages the same race category as the child's father. During the sampled years, 38 of the men share their child's racial identity, only 10 of the women do, and in the 3 cases where the child is described as a mestizo, neither do, showing nearly a 4 to 1 ratio in favor of the father's race category over that of the mother.

There appears to have been a similar system in place in cases of bastardry, where the child's mother's name was listed, but the child's father's name was officially unknown. All children of single mothers, referred to as *hijos naturales* or natural children, were assigned the same race category as their mothers in 1791. Given the

¹⁹⁸ Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1791-1792.

preponderance of pardos and others of African descent in Vallegrande, it is curious that not one of these children were ever listed as pardo if their mother was not, suggesting that either none of these children were noticeably biracial, or that this difference was officially overlooked.¹⁹⁹ The fact that priests favored fathers and single mothers seems to suggest that racial boundaries were flexible enough that priests did not simply rely upon physical characteristics in their decision making, but saw race as part of the social status that children shared with their parents. As Robert Jackson suggests in *Race, Caste and Status*, in the context of nearby Cochabamba, the difference between an indio and a mestizo was often based upon certain stereotypes surrounding dress and behavior, and not necessarily upon ancestry.²⁰⁰ There are certainly some historians who view the *sistema de castas* as little more than a social metaphor than a true system of racial categorization.²⁰¹

There were noteworthy exceptions to this patriarchal method of racial classification. Pardo men whose wives were Spaniards were eight times as likely to have children who were categorized as pardos, but Spaniards whose wives were pardos passed their race on to their children only a third of the time. The dominance of the pardo category is quite clear: among mixed-race families the children of pardos became pardos 90 percent of the time, but the children of Spaniards, Indians and mulattos shared their child's race only a third of the time. The children of mestizos and cuarterones never had children that shared their category in mixed marriages. As a result, such unions generally led to an increase in the pardo population at the expense of all other groups. The decision

¹⁹⁹ Jackson, 122.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 118.

²⁰¹ Restall, *The Black Middle*, 95-96.

to override the patriarchal model described above indicates that there were indeed racial definitions that referenced physiological differences between groups, creating social boundaries that individual priests could not bring themselves to cross. The predponderance of the pardo category in cases of children born from mixed marriages underscores just how difficult it was to escape from *afromestizo calidad* categories for those who had been placed in them. Persons of predominantly indigenous or European descent would still generally have been assigned an *afromestizo calidad* category if they were known to possess some African ancestry.²⁰²

There were occasional instances where priests did not record a child's *calidad*. Some of these were probably errors, and more than a few were likely efforts to mollify locally prominent families who were touchy about references to mixed ancestry, but there were a few cases where racial classification may have been deemed impossible. *Votados*, abandoned children of unknown parentage, must have presented the priests with a categorization problem. I noted only three *votados* in Vallegrande's baptismal record: one in 1791, and two from 1711-1712. Two were not assigned race categories in the baptismal record, but the third was categorized as a pardo. These three cases reinforce the notion that both visual and social cues informed the assignment of race in Vallegrande, and suggest that in the absence of certain identifying information, it may have been easier to avoid classification altogether.²⁰³

As the mixed marriages in the baptismal record and padrones de indios suggest, race categories were quite porous in Vallegrande. There were probably few people

²⁰² Castleman, 99-100. Of course, there were reasons to find the pardo category socially desirable, as Castleman discusses on 101. In Vallegrande, pardo did not necessarily signify low social status. In fact, quite the opposite may have been true.

²⁰³ Restall, *The Black Middle*, 95-96.

without mixed ancestry in the region. Instead, Vallegrande was an intimate social environment with a population that probably become more physically and culturally homogenous over time, even though they continued to be organized into separate racial categories in the parish record. The español and pardo, mulato and cuarterón surnames in Vallegrande demonstrate this balance between intimate relationships and social separateness. At the end of the eighteenth century, Galvis, Barrientos, Barrancos, Abalos, Morales, Roman and Ynojosa were common surnames among pardo families, while Romero, Osinaga and Peña were more regularly connected with Spaniards. However, the majority fell somewhere in between, and there were many names that overlapped seemingly separate racial groups: Rojas, Robles, Cuellar and Perez appeared at least four times in both the Spanish and the mixed-race groups. As a result of this complexity, categorization must have become an increasingly difficult task. Although the task of categorization fell to the local priests, even they could not agree upon the meaning of the categories they employed, as the next section will demonstrate.

Disagreement and Ambiguity: The Robles Family

The fact that mixed marriages and other more informal unions did exist, probably many more than were recorded by the priests, and that the children of those unions were often placed into race categories from which they technically should have been excluded, reveals the fiction of supposedly pure racial categories, and demonstrates the porous nature of racial boundaries. These examples also perpetuate the notion that the priests who essentially oversaw the casta system agreed with each other about how to categorize their parishioners. If the aggregate baptismal data from Vallegrande suggests clear trends

for the usage of certain racial categories in the region in different synchronic moments, a diachronic analysis of selected Vallegrandino families reveals not only disagreement between priests about the meaning of such categories but a great deal of ambiguity within racial categories in general, especially the categories *español*, *pardo*, and *mestizo*.

For the purposes of this study, the individuals and families who bore the Robles surname will be used as a tool for understanding the meaning of racial categories in Vallegrande. I chose them, in part, because of the surname's early association in the region with persons of mixed-race and partial African descent, embodied in the person of militia captain Domingo de Robles, and partly because the surname Robles was locally common in Vallegrande. Individuals with the surname Robles had lived in Vallegrande for more than two centuries, during which time they took part in its settlement, defended it from attack, and participated in its development, making the family useful subjects for a diachronic analysis that utilized parish records. But while the individuals and families in this study do share the surname Robles and will be referred to here as the "Robles family", they should not be conceived of as a single lineage, or even necessarily the descendants of Domingo de Robles and his kin. While many of the people described in this study were clearly related to each other, the connections between the vast majority of them are unclear or entirely absent. Some of the people who bear the surname Robles came from outside the region, slaves acquired the name from their masters, and many, many others acquired the name from their mother's line, their fathers officially unknown.

The analysis below is derived from baptismal, marriage, and death records from the Vallegrande parish from the years 1771-1791, with additional data from the decades immediately before and after this target period, which was collected in order to capture

additional information about individuals and families that appeared during the target period. The dates 1771 and 1791 were chosen to begin and end the target period because they were consistent with the dates I had already used to gather general baptismal information about the region, the results of which are presented above. This analysis also draws upon data derived from 37 marriage records during the target period that included someone from the Robles family as well as 21 death records between 1785 and 1791 for individuals bearing the Robles surname.

In general, the racial demography of the Robles family was broadly consistent with the rest of the region: pardos represented the largest single group, with españoles second, and mestizos third. The rate at which *calidad* was or was not reported certainly altered these numbers at times, but did not reverse the overall demographic outlines sketched above. While there were consistencies, there were also differences: individuals bearing the name Robles were twice as likely to be described as pardos in the baptismal record than all families who baptized their children in 1771 (65 percent compared to 32 percent) and 50 percent more likely to be described as such than the families who baptized their children in 1791. While the sample from which these figures were derived is small, 110 baptisms between 1771 and 1791, it does suggest that individuals bearing the surname were more closely associated with the pardo racial category than most Vallegrandinos. Persons bearing the Robles surname were less likely to be described as mestizo: only 4 percent were described in this way between 1771 and 1791, compared to 28 percent of Vallegrandinos who baptized children in 1771, and 11 percent in 1791. About one quarter (23 percent) of the individuals in the Robles family sample were described as españoles, which is consistent with the rest of Vallegrande at the time,

especially given the small size of the sample: 20 percent in 1771 and 34 percent in 1791. Just as in the rest of Vallegrande, individuals who bore the surname Robles were also mulattos, blacks, Indians, and cuarterones, representing each element of Vallegrandino society and every racial category employed by the parish priests. Some individuals who bore the surname were members of the region's more prestigious families and were consistently referred to as Don and Doña in the parish record. Some even bore military titles. At least one of these individuals had slaves themselves who also bore the surname Robles. The vast majority, however, were probably laborers on local estancias and haciendas. Thus, the Robles surname is suitable for study not only because of its permanence in the region, but also because it is representative of the racial and social complexity of Vallegrandino society in general.

Legitimacy and Residency

Most of the children baptized into the Robles family (82 percent) were born to married parents, a somewhat higher rate of legitimacy than was common to the region at the time. This still meant that nearly one in five children baptized between 1771 and 1791 were considered illegitimate, not simply *hijos naturales* born into what we might consider common law unions, but bastards for whom paternal information is given as "*padre no conocido*". Thus, about one fifth of the children baptized with the Robles surname during the target period acquired the name from their mothers. Because I used both paternal and maternal information to track families over the target period, this lack of paternal data made it impossible to link any of these children to potential siblings for the sake of further analysis.

Very few of the individuals who appeared in the parish records during this time were described as living in one of the region's three urban centers: Vallegrande, Pucará, and Pampagrande. All the rest lived on or near one of the region's many estancias or haciendas, and were likely to be landowners, servants, or arrenderos who farmed a small section of a larger property.²⁰⁴ Given the fact that both Pucará and Pampagrande had their own, separate parish books by this time, individuals who appeared in this study tended to be from that section of the Vallegrande region that was nearest to the city of Vallegrande itself. Place names were not consistently recorded in the baptismal record until late 1784, before which time the priests simply recorded whether or not the individual was from the Vallegrande parish. Community information recorded after 1784 demonstrates that individuals with the surname Robles lived in many parts of the region, and also seems to reveal one important geographical curiosity: individuals with the surname Robles were most likely to live on or near the Holguin estancia (42 percent), which was probably located in the Holguin Valley north of El Trigo. The connection to Holguin is interesting because it is one section of the Vallegrande region where landowners appear to have brought in persons of African descent as laborers. P. Molina M. references a local story (the veracity of which he doubts) that a certain Jesus de Holguín, the son of the former Governor of Santa Cruz, don Gonzalo Soliz de Holguín, brought in freed slaves to work on his Vallegrande encomienda, known as the Sierras de Holguín.²⁰⁶ It is also interesting because, in spite of the connection to the surname Robles, it suggests that the Holguin

²⁰⁴ Viedma, 103.

²⁰⁶ *Reflejos*, 2 Sept. 1926, 1.

group had no connection to the famous Domingo de Robles, who was associated with the town of Guadalupe, located south of Vallegrande.

While three quarters of the children connected to the Robles family baptized during the target period were born to families that appeared in the parish record just once, about one quarter of the families appeared two or more times. Of the 110 births in which one parent had the surname Robles between 1771 and 1791, 85 of the families mentioned appeared only once, 16 were listed twice, 4 three times, and 1 appeared 6 times when death and marriage records were factored in. These numbers should not be taken as an indication of family size, given the fact that baptismal information for many of the children living in the region at the time is either missing or was never recorded. This is evident even in this small sample because a number of children not listed in the baptismal record do appear in the death records for the parish during the target period.

In seven of the families that appear more than once in the parish records either all children are assigned the same *calidad* or *calidad* is consistently omitted. In all the rest of the families that appear multiple times, the *calidad* of the children baptized varied within the family. This variance is clearly connected to the inconstant usage of racial terminology among priests. Thus in the rare occasions where the same priest baptized more than one child within the same family, racial terms were applied consistently.

Priests in Vallegrande utilized a wide variety of racial terms, and while there was a great deal of agreement about which terms to use, there was widespread disagreement about what each category meant. Teniente de Cura Juan Manuel Montaña utilized the broadest palette of racial categories in this sample: in addition to español and pardo, he described his parishioners as mestizos more regularly than any other priest, and once

employed the rarely-applied term *cuarterón*. Other priests avoided the term *mestizo* completely, and instead used the term *pardo* almost exclusively to denote mixed ancestry. Priests who used both the terms *pardo* and *mulatto* appeared to see them as different categories, but disagreed as to who was a *pardo* and who was a *mulatto*. What is particularly striking is the degree to which both the terms *pardo* and *español* are applied to the same individuals in this sample.

The variety of racial terms applied to one family over the course of two decades illustrates this inconsistency. Sebastian Robles and his wife, Ursula Aguilera, a couple from the vicinity of the Holguin estancia, appeared more frequently than any other couple in the parish birth and death records during target period. Between 1772 and 1789, at least six different children were described as belonging to them if baptismal, marriage, death records are taken into account. Between 1772 and 1780, the couple baptized two daughters and a son, but three different priests assigned three different racial identities to the siblings: the first, Juliana, was described as an *española*, the second, Juan, as a *mestizo* and the third, Francisca, as a *parda*. Tragedy struck the family in 1788, when two of the couple's children died: first a fourteen-year-old son in July, and then another daughter in October. Both children were described as *pardos* in the parish record, and neither was listed in the earlier baptismal records for the family. Finally, Ursula herself died in late 1790. Sebastian married again a year later, this time to a Cochabambina named Dionicia Costaña. Both Sebastian and his new wife were described as *españoles* by the presiding priest: Father Miguel Anzuliaga García.

This same racial ambiguity seems to have followed the next generation of Robles children. Another one of Sebastian and Ursula's sons, Angelo Robles, appeared in the

region's marriage records when he married Antonia Caraballo, who was also from Holguin. Here the priest, Bernardo Herbas, described them both as españoles. However, when their daughter Maria Manuela was baptized in 1790, the entire family was described as pardo by the priest, Simón Antonio Saenz de Galarza. When a second daughter, Theresa, was baptized in 1792, the officiating priest decided to classify the couple separately: Antonia was once again an española, and only Angelo and the young Theresa were classified as pardos.

Juliana Robles, the daughter of Sebastian and Ursula that was described as an española at her baptism in 1772 was also classified inconsistently thereafter. Juliana married another Holguin resident, Luciano Osinaga, and the couple baptized a son, Llorio, in 1788. In that year, Father Anzuliaga described all of them as pardos. However, when the couple baptized another son, Eugenio, in 1791, an event for which Juliana's brother and sister-in-law, Angelo and Antonia, served as padrinos, the family was described as españoles by Father Galarza, the same priest who listed her brother as a pardo two years before.

Inconsistent references to the race of an individual who appeared both in the parish marriage and baptismal records and in the 1787 *Padrón de indios*, a listing of tribute-paying Indians and their families, suggest that a document's fiscal or social function might impact the racial categories in which some individuals were placed. Andrea Robles, first appeared in the parish records when she married Fermín Limon, a man from Mojocoyo, in 1771. In that instance, the couple's racial *calidad* was not mentioned. The couple had three children between 1772 and 1777, two of whom were described as pardos, and the third as a mulatto, demonstrating once more the variable

application of racial categories among priests: don Pedro Antonio de Herbas baptized the two pardos, and Blas José de Ripalda i Menacho baptized the child whom he described as mulatto. In 1783, Andrea was said to be Fermín's widow when she married Santiago Galarza, but this time both Andrea and her new husband were listed as *indios tributarios* by the priest, José Manuel González Merino. Andrea and Santiago appeared again five years later in the 1787 *padrón de indios*, which counted the indigenous tributary population. Here both were described as *forasteros*²⁰⁷ living on an estancia called Santiago, but only Santiago Galarza is listed as an indio—Andrea is described as a parda.²⁰⁸ It is unclear if the application of different terms of *calidad* in Andrea's case is simply a difference of perception or has some other foundation. Since Andrea herself was not obliged to pay the tribute tax, the padrón administrator had no reason to classify her as an Indian for the sake of padding the tribute numbers. However, the description of Andrea as an Indian in the September 1783 marriage record may say something about the connection between *calidad* and marriage for women. As Robert McCaa demonstrates in his study of the city of Parral in colonial Mexico, racial drift among women was generally connected to the racial category assigned to the men they were marrying.²⁰⁹ Andrea, whose three children were assigned to one of two Afromestizo categories when she was married to Fermín Limon in the 1770s, might have become seen an Indian only when she married Santiago Galarza. The union may also have affected the racial and, thus, social status of their children as well. In November of 1783 (two months after the union described above) a women named Andrea Robles, here the wife of a Santiago

²⁰⁷ Strangers or outsiders. There were no *originarios*, or local Indians, in the Vallegrande padróns.

²⁰⁸ LDS-SD. Legajo 48, 1787 padrón de Vallegrande, #1834938, item 1, page 36 recto.

²⁰⁹ McCaa, 497.

Castro, is the mother of a little girl who is baptized as an India by Blas José de Ripalda y Menacho, the same priest who baptized one of Andrea's children as a mulatto in the 1770s. If the two Andreas are the same woman, it seems that Andrea's choice of marriage partner had implications for the *calidad* of her subsequent children.

There is greater consistency in the racial categories assigned to another woman of mixed ancestry, Eugenia Cuellar, one of Andrea's neighbors at the Santiago estancia. Eugenia was the daughter of Bernardo Cuellar, an Indian listed as a forastero in the 1787 padron, and Pasquala Mejia, a parda, both residents tied to the Santiago Estancia. Nearly everyone in the family, including Eugenia, who was 12 years old in that year, her father, and her brother, Pedro, were counted as Indians in the padrón; only their mother was not.²¹⁰ In 1791 a single Indian woman from Santiago named Eugenia Cuellar gave birth to a son named Mariano. In spite of her mixed ancestry, Eugenia must also have seemed to be an Indian to the priest.

As other studies have demonstrated, there may have been a certain reluctance on the part of local priests to assign *calidad* to locally prominent families whom they might have perceived to be of mixed descent. Historian Sarah Chambers references the difficulties that parish priests in Arequipa had in assigning racial terminology to their parishioners. Although the great majority of Arequipeños considered themselves to be white, Chambers demonstrates the flexibility of the term in practice, and notes that priests very frequently chose to omit *calidad* altogether to avoid either recording false information due to pressure from their parishioners, or potentially offending their

²¹⁰ LDS-SD, Legajo 48, 1787 Padrón de Vallegrande #1834938, it. 1, p34 verso. Vallegrande Parish Baptismal Registry, 1791.

parishioners by assigning them what the priest might have considered their true caste.²¹¹ Locally prominent families were particularly sensitive to this. In my study of Vallegrande, *calidad* was omitted only 5 percent of the time during the target period (1771-1791), but some prominent families consistently avoided classification. Militia captain don Joseph Robles was not assigned a racial category at his marriage to Ana Maria Mais in 1764, and the priests made no mention of the family's racial *calidad* when don Juan's children were baptized in 1772 and 1775. The same is true for don Juan's sister Theodora, and brother don Diego Robles, also a militia captain, and another brother, Lucas Robles. The next generation of Robles descendants is not as consistently shielded from racial categorization: don Diego's son Nicolas is described as an español, but his son Pedro Nolasco Robles is described as a pardo. At the baptisms of two of Diego's grandchildren by another son, Melchor, one is described as a cuarterón, and the other as a mestizo. All of this is complicated by the fact that the family patriarch, militia captain don Antonio Robles, father of Diego, Juan, Lucas and Theodora, is listed in Melgar y Montaña's study of Vallegrande among the "Pardos and military officials of the Fort of Guadalupe and other soldiers from the town" in 1719 at the site of the fort of the free pardos established by Domingo Robles in the 1610s.²¹²

All of this inconsistently suggests that the *calidad* system in Vallegrande was hardly a system at all. While aggregates of families like the Robles or entire communities like that of Vallegrande suggest stable trends in the frequency of the usage of racial terminology in Vallegrande, these seemingly separate categories seem to break down at

²¹¹ Chambers, 84, 87.

²¹² Melgar y Montaña, 26.

the micro level. Entire families frequently move between one or more racial categories over the years depending, it seems, upon the perspective of the presiding priests. While the parish record data utilized in this study is too scant to point toward any systemic whitening or darkening of any one family in the colonial record, it certainly does point to the flexibility of racial categories within a single region. It was entirely possible for many mixed-race families, who formed the majority of the region, to be considered white, but that whiteness, once achieved, was by no means permanent.

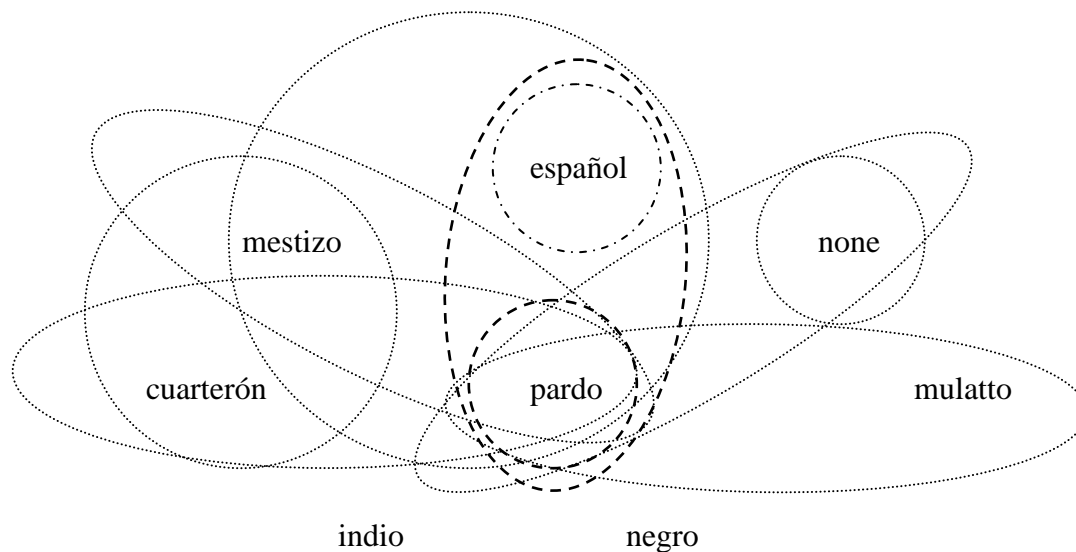
The ambiguous racial status of the Vallegrandinos referenced above points again to the artificial, constructed nature of whiteness and indigeneity in Vallegrande. The regularity with which individuals and entire families moved between the various white and mixed-race categories, and between mixed-race and indigenous categories certainly suggests the difficulty of categorizing parish residents in a community where people of European, Indigenous, and African descent had coexisted for many years. For locally prominent families whose racial backgrounds were less than purely European, categorization according to racial *calidad* seems to have been avoided and, instead, references to class and status became more important.

Figure 6 illustrates the different combinations of *calidad* terms that were applied to the children of individual families. Each oval denotes associated terms, and the key below demonstrates the frequency of each combination. The image reveals several striking trends: the terms *español* and *pardo* are commonly confused, but there are only rare instances where the terms *pardo* and *mulatto* are conflated. There is never any confusion at all between the term *pardo* and *negro*. Andrea Robles is the only person described both as a *parda* and an *india*. This effect can be partially explained by the fact

that the terms mulatto, indio, and negro appeared only rarely in this sample, while the terms pardo and español are quite common. All of this does not mean that there was essentially no difference between the three main *calidad* terms in Vallegrande: español, mestizo, and pardo, but it certainly does indicate that there was a great deal of overlap between these racial categories, and not much physiological and perhaps social difference between many of the persons within these categories. If a pardo of known African descent could fairly easily pass as an español and even frequently intermarry with españoles, then these findings go a long way toward explaining why there is so little perceived African ancestry in the vast majority of Vallegrandinos in the region today.

Chart 6a: The Diverse Application of Terms of *Calidad* to Children in the Same Household 1771-1792

<u>Racial Categories Applied to the Children in the Same Household</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>
Children described only as pardos:	6 families
Children described only as españoles:	2 families
Children described as mestizo or cuarterón:	1 family
Children described as pardo or cuarterón:	1 family
Children described as pardo or español:	6 families
Children described as pardo or <i>calidad</i> not given:	1 family
Children described as pardo or mulatto:	1 family
Children described as pardo or mestizo:	1 family
Children described as pardo, mestizo or español:	1 family
No <i>calidad</i> given:	1 family

Chart 6b: Visual Representation of the Diverse Application of Terms of *Calidad* to Children in the Same Household 1771-1792**Key: Numbers of Families**

Each oval denotes the various *calidad* terms applied to the children of couples who appeared at least twice in the parish record during the target period:

1 family ———

2 families - - -

3 or more families - -

Padrinos

The social hierarchy of colonial Latin America very much mirrored the racial hierarchy implied by the *sistema de castas*: whites or españoles constituted the top socioracial rung of the social ladder, Indians and, especially, blacks were at the bottom, and all admixtures of the three filled out the spaces in between. Mixed, especially African, ancestry supposedly kept individuals out of important positions in the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies that dominated colonial Latin American society, but the extensive overlap between racial categories in Vallegrande raises the question of how much this overlap impacted the region's social hierarchy.²¹³ Parish records in Vallegrande provide only occasional references to class and occupation: the terms Don and Doña implied elite status and land ownership, and military titles like captain and *maese de campo* were both indications of militia activity and high social status. There are, however, regular references to padrinos and madrinas in birth, death, and marriage records, which do provide some indication of the social connections between different individuals and families, and by extension individuals of different racial and social categories.

Padrinos and Madrinas are generally translated as “godparents” in English, but the terms function differently. Both godparents and padrinos are partly ceremonial, partly practical, and do link the families together. The priests recording race and family information in 1791 only recorded the race of the padrinos for part of the year, until the end of May; after this they suddenly abandoned the practice. As a result, the race data below includes baptismal information for parts of 1790 as well in order to broaden the

²¹³ Burkholder and Johnson, 103, 185, 314.

sample, which includes 142 cases. The most salient features that influenced the choice of padrino in the 1790-1791 baptismal record appeared to be race and community, while blood ties may have been less important. Most españoles and pardos chose people from the same race category as themselves for their padrinos: españoles chose other españoles 62 percent of the time, or in 23 of 37 cases, and pardos chose other pardos 66 percent of the time, or in 52 of 78 cases. Mestizos, on the other hand, chose pardos more frequently than any other group, 47 percent of the time, and chose Spaniards only 30 percent of the time. Mestizos only chose other mestizos as padrinos 18 percent of the time. There were only six individuals labeled as indios for whom their padrinos had race information, and most chose españoles as padrinos. That said, two of the three cases involved older Indians from the cordillera, a code word for Chiriguano. These individuals may have been servants in Spanish households, and thus had little choice in their padrinos. When españoles chose non españoles, they were much more likely to choose pardos as padrinos than any other group. Pardos were fairly evenly split between españoles and mestizos in their choice of padrinos. Yet for all of this, the share of Spanish padrinos was greater than their share of baptized children, while the proportion of all other groups, even pardos, declined somewhat in comparison to their proportion in the baptismal record. This tends to reinforce the hypothesis that families chose padrinos from a class perceived to be somewhat higher than one's own.

Families tended to choose padrinos from their own communities about half the time, in 49 percent of the cases in 1791. There was also a slight tendency to choose urban

Chart 7: Race of Parents and Race of Padrinos Chosen, Numbers

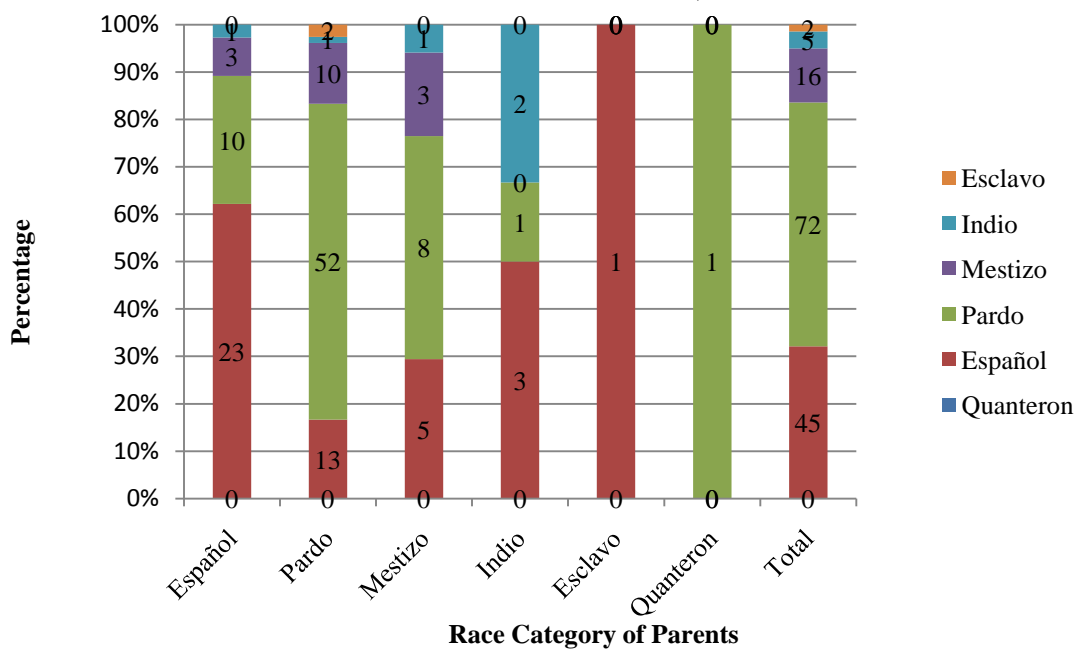
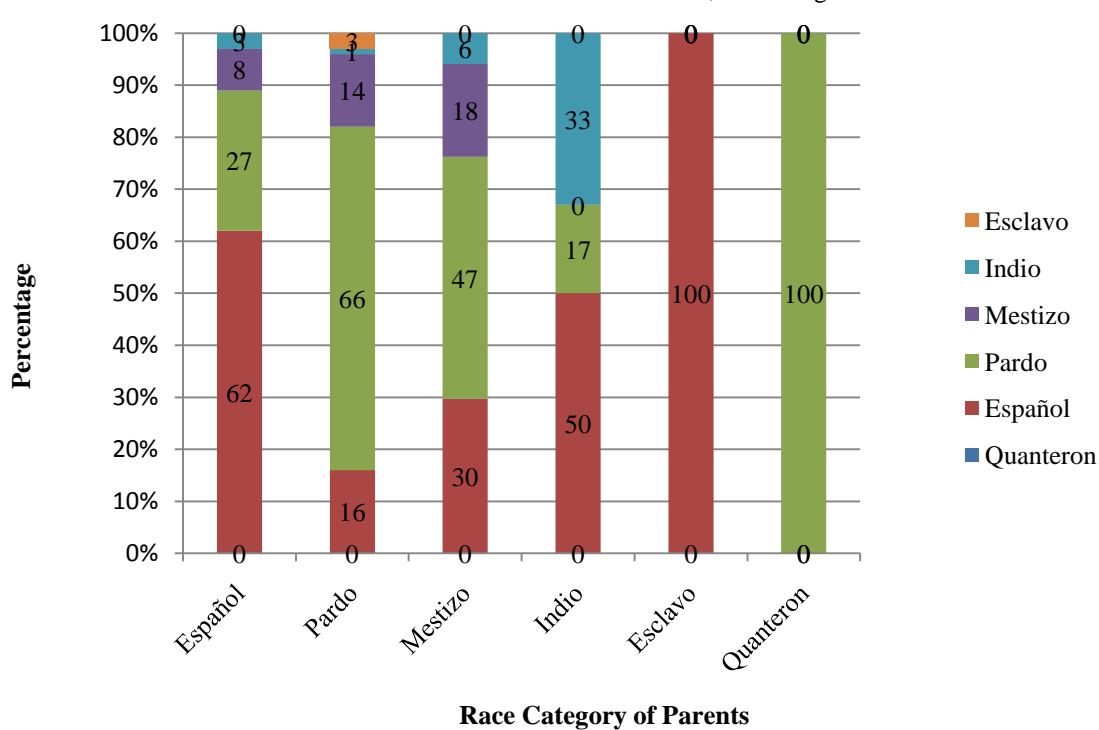


Chart 8: Race of Parents and Race of Padrinos Chosen, Percentage



padrinos over rural padrinos. While only 25 percent of the families baptizing their children were from Vallegrande, 34 percent of padrinos were from the city, a significant increase. It is also instructive to break these numbers down by race: while only 21 percent of both the pardos and mestizos who baptized their children in 1791 lived in Vallegrande, 31 percent of their padrinos did. About 40 percent of the españoles who baptized their children came from Vallegrande, but 48 percent of their padrinos did, making them the most urban racial group. Only one of the four mulattos came from Vallegrande, but three out of four of their padrinos did. Only indios chose padrinos who were less likely to be urban than themselves.

Finally, the families who baptized their children shared the same surname as one of their padrinos less than 10 percent of the time. Shared surnames do not necessarily equal family relationship, but the low number suggests that family was probably the least important factor in one's choice of padrino. Thus, when families chose a padrino for their child, they were more likely to choose someone from their home community, or even someone from Vallegrande, than to choose a close family member: a sibling or cousin bearing the same surname. Pardos and Españoles were likely to choose others like themselves, while all other groups were unlikely to choose people in their own group. If we assume that families did tend to choose someone that they perceived to be equal to or more highly ranked than themselves in society (although there are interesting exceptions), then Spaniards assumed their expected place at the top of the social hierarchy. The padrino information also suggests that pardos were not particularly associated with low status in Vallegrande, and instead were often selected as padrinos. Certainly there were social advantages to whiteness in Vallegrande, but when this study's findings about the

nature of race, class, and status are considered, it seems that race created few social barriers between Vallegrande's españoles and pardos.

Mestizo and Pardo Revisited

Information about Vallegrande's mixed marriages is also important because it sheds some light upon the instability of the mestizo category in the region. The size of the pardo category relative to the mestizo category in late colonial Vallegrande certainly flies in the face of research from other regions of Bolivia that suggests that the mestizo category was the default racial category in social terms.²¹⁴ Instead, the data demonstrates that none of the mestizo parents involved in exogamous marriages passed their status on to their children in the 1791-1792 baptismal record, suggesting that in Vallegrande, mestizo was not a destination category but a liminal one. In Robert Jackson's work on the Valle Bajo in Cochabamba, he uses parish records to demonstrate the shift away from an Indian identity that occurred there, and the resulting growth of the mestizo category. In Vallegrande, where there was no large indigenous population living in the region during the late colonial period to facilitate the growth of a substantial mestizo community, the mestizo category appears to have been quite temporary. Thus, eight mestizos became pardos, six mestizos became españoles and one became an Indian. In fact, children only received a mestizo identity when they were the offspring of a Spaniard and an Indian, representing the only case where the race calculus of the *sistema de castas* functioned as it claimed to.

Sarah Chambers' study of colonial Arequipa, Peru, reveals similar findings. In it, she postulates that mestizos were seen as little different than indios. Given the fact that

²¹⁴ Jackson, 3-4.

the term mestizo appeared in Vallegrande's parish records during the target period only when one parent was considered to be an español and other an indio, then it seems likely that Vallegrande's mestizos were more deeply stamped by their indigenous heritage than individuals who bore other terms of mixed-ancestry.²¹⁵ Chambers' study also demonstrates the instability of the mestizo category across time. Families were often referred as mestizos for only a single generation during the late colonial period, because exogamous marriage led the descendants of individuals who bore this racial identity to be absorbed into either one of the 'pure' racial categories, indio or español, or into the other large mixed-race category, pardo. It may be that the pardo category, which generally had no clear connection to indigenous ancestry and only occasional connections to African ancestry, was seen as less Indian, more Spanish and, thus, more white.

What Did Pardo Mean?

Within the practice of racial categorization, the term pardo appears to be the most flexible of all terms, encompassing such a broad spectrum of the region's population that it might include slaves and their masters, persons described as Indians, mestizos, and many individuals who are just as regularly referred to as white. If pardos had African ancestors, they clearly had European and indigenous ancestors too. This flexibility appears to have grown over the years. The decline of the term mestizo and the durability of the term pardo may imply a shift in what the term pardo meant in Vallegrande over time. The pardo category may have begun the eighteenth century with a stronger association with African ancestry than it possessed by the first quarter of the nineteenth, when the gradual absorption of the term mestizo into both the español and pardo

²¹⁵ Chambers, 85.

categories stretched the boundaries of both. As the data above demonstrates, there was a great deal of overlap and ambiguity between the categories mestizo, pardo, and español. This hypothesis certainly challenges both the perceived purity of whiteness in Vallegrande, but also the particular Africanness of the pardo category. However, in spite of the fact that a pardo's mixed ancestry included Spanish and indigenous antecedents, and although many of these individuals eventually passed into the category of those who were considered socially white, in Vallegrande the term pardo was incoherent without also making reference to the perceived, and in many cases real African ancestry of the persons who sometimes bore this identity. To ignore this fact is to also ignore the many elements that made Vallegrande unique from surrounding regions: its geography, its early demographic trends, its role within the larger economic system of the Charcas Audiencia, and its location along a key military and cultural frontier. There is sense that over the years, to be pardo was to be local, and to be mestizo was to be an outsider. In the very few references to mestizos in the mid 1820s, they were often outsiders, individuals from the Cochabamba region or from Santa Cruz.

Conclusion

A story is told about Picasso and an American soldier at the end of World War II. The G.I. complained that he could not understand Picasso's portraits because everything was distorted; the eyes were misplaced, the nose misshapen, the mouth twisted, and so on. "What should a picture look like?" inquired Picasso. The G.I. whipped out his wallet and produced a photograph of his comely girlfriend. "Like this!" Picasso looked carefully at the photograph and then said, "She's kind of small, isn't she?"²¹⁶

This paper has attempted to explore its subject through a variety of sources: representations of Vallegrande's foundation story, newspaper articles, parish records and padrones, and secondary sources. Like a cubist painting, the result is a mosaic of themes and methods that attempts to make simultaneously visible the creators of these representations, the representations they created, and the materials they constructed them from. The study suggests the possibility of new narratives and new or altered social actors. Although I have made an effort to collect my evidence and present my subject in an objective manner, I am also intensely aware that I have created the conversation between the representations presented in these pages, and even supplied the terms over which they would argue. Some of the questions emerge logically out of starkly different conceptions of the past, but each are answered according to my own method and criteria. As both researcher and historian, I cannot overlook the powerful position in which I have placed myself.

This project emerged from a genuine interest in Vallegrande's history and origins that was rooted in an intimate knowledge of a small corner of the Vallegrande region where my wife and I lived for nearly three years. Those years were a time of great political upheaval in Bolivia. My neighbors, my wife, and I lived under four different

²¹⁶ Solso, 236.

Bolivian presidents: Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada (Goni) was in office when we arrived in 2003 and Evo Morales had been recently elected when we left in 2006. The first decade of the new millennium was also a period of great change in the region where we lived. Soon after we arrived, the largest town near my home was connected to the nation's electrical grid for the first time. Televisions and light bulbs rapidly replaced radios and gas lamps. While the town still had only one telephone when we left, during my last visit I noticed children surfing the internet in one of the town's tiendas.

When I began my research, both Sanabria's work and Viedma's report were readily available, and I initially accepted Viedma's version as both the "true" and "hidden" version of Vallegrande's history, reflecting a moment when the community spoke with its own voice through the pages of the official report. Further research eroded the clarity of this position, and caused me to reexamine how both versions came to be constructed. The themes presented within each representation are certainly present in the available data for the history of Vallegrande, but also reflect the interests of the storytellers. Viedma's story suggests themes of (a predominantly) African slave ancestry, flight from authority, and archival silence. In the more recent Vallegrandino version of the story the themes featured are nobility and European ancestry, an independent (but loyal) spirit of settlement and conquest, and archival abundance. Both stories are set in an environment of conquest and military success.

The contrasting positions are important. Viedma added the local story he heard to the racial/fiscal data he had collected and drew his own conclusions.²¹⁷ Vallegrandino

²¹⁷ Abercrombie explains this impulse as follows: "The colonizing state demanded writings for its archive, and subordinated peoples were duly represented there." Abercrombie, 41.

historians peopled their narrative with historical characters that they recognized: the seventeenth century Spanish and criollo elite. The language of the *cédula* logically inspired them to connect these figures, their social ancestors, to noble ancestry. The contrasting positions are again evident in how each story represents the founders' attitudes toward the state and locally powerful families. In Viedma's version, the founders were *huidos*, slaves who had escaped their colonial masters, the rural elite. Viedma's attitude towards these people and their mixed-race descendants reflects conflicting attitudes within the modern Spanish state: humanist statements of sympathy for circumstances surrounding rural slavery, and intolerance of a people who were out of place, damaging to the productivity of the region. The Vallegrandino version was written at a time when the nation was looking backward at its first century of independence while simultaneously experiencing a growing sense of regional identity. The story of a group of founders who bravely took part in the Empire's expansion and also asserted their ownership over that project connects very well with the regional discourse of the 1920s. Finally, the efforts of Vallegrandino historians to respond to the near voicelessness of their colonial counterparts in Viedma's report with a torrent of archival data were an effort to decolonize their history, and speak with their own voices about the distant past. That this was a project conducted by local intellectuals does not invalidate this effort of scholarship and self-expression.

The two accounts do share one theme: that of the conquest of the Chiriguano. Studies of the Chiriguano make it evident that the frontier region between the various Chiriguano communities and the Audiencia of Charcas was a violent place. Colonial accounts involving the Chiriguano generally foreground the barbarity of indigenous

groups who resist the state, and consistently label their attacks upon citizens of the state as crimes. The Chiriguano attitude towards the encroachment of Charcas upon their lands, had anyone bothered to write it down, would probably have had a similar ring. Yet violence was merely one way in which frontier settlers interacted with the other side. Negotiation, temporary alliances, trade, intercultural exchange, and miscegenation all speak to a much more complex frontier world. For a time, Vallegrande was an actor in that world, and far more engaged in the complexities contained within such a place than the idea of conquest would suggest. The fact that early Vallegrandinos may have attempted to shield their Chiriguano neighbors from the colonial state is really a more powerful and interesting story than one of unimpeded destruction. Yet, from its inception, Vallegrande was a part of the Spanish colonial world, and as the physical space that contained the idea of Vallegrande as a region and a people grew to fill its geography, it ceased to be a frontier where coexistence with the Chiriguano was possible.

Beyond analyzing earlier accounts of Vallegrande's foundation and settlement as representations, this study had another objective: exploring the role of persons of African descent in Vallegrande's foundation. My interest was sparked as much by Viedma's claims about the role of Africans in that story as by the present absence of persons of African descent in the Vallegrandino version. I think it is now clear that Africans and *afromestizos* did play a part in the foundation of Vallegrande and the peopling of the region, although my findings challenge both Viedma's assertions regarding the extent of African involvement and the silence of some Vallegrandino historians. For a time, Vallegrande was a destination for such persons (and many others) both by design and by invitation, beginning when Escalante requested that Domingo de Robles accompany him

on his journey as the *maese de campo* passed through the Tomina frontier. There is certainly no reason to deny Escalante his place in that narrative, but characters like Domingo de Robles, García de Mosquera, and Juan Martín should be included alongside him as equal participants in that endeavor. Refocusing our attention upon Africans and *afromestizos* results in a narrative that is itself a representation of the past, but I think it is not without value, particularly now that so much attention is again being placed upon what it means to be a Bolivian, or a *cruceño*, or even a *Vallegrandino* in these days of political and social polarization in Bolivia.

An issue of central importance within this study has been the investigation, primarily through parish records, of the meaning of the term *pardo* in Vallegrande. In the context of the parish record, *pardo* was unquestionably a racial category, and quite an important one in Vallegrande throughout the colonial period, but the meaning of that category was not always the same over time. Instead, it appears that the term was more strongly tied to African ancestry in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries than it may have been later on. Furthermore, while in regions to the west and east the term *mestizo* came to be the default racial category, in Vallegrande the term *mestizo* was used less and less frequently by priests as the eighteenth century progressed, falling almost totally out of use for anyone but outsiders by 1825. Individuals who might otherwise have fallen into that category were probably placed into either the *español* or *pardo* categories. At the same time, what might be termed as the social difference between individuals labeled as *españoles*, or whites, and *pardos* diminished, until it became quite common for individuals to receive both labels over the course of their lives, from their baptism, to their marriage or marriages, and finally at their death. The terms

were consistent over time, but the meaning of those terms, and the characteristics meant to denote such categories, appear to have changed. However, in spite of the growing flexibility of the term *pardo* over time, it never completely lost its association with African ancestry by those charged with categorizing the population by race: the parish priests.

The reasons for Vallegrande's unique demography are complex, and this study has only addressed them in a very preliminary manner. Vallegrande's small indigenous population and the apparent absence of an indigenous originario population must have required early property owners to attract free wage labor. Indigenous servants, almost certainly purchased from slave traffickers, were also extensively used. The few extant references to laborers in this early period seem to confirm the use of mestizo and *afromestizo arrenderos* on rural properties.²¹⁸ This study has explored the concept of Vallegrande as a frontier region, and the sorts of rights and protections that were extended to willing settlers who had been criminalized in colonial Charcas. While this must certainly have drawn many persons of African descent into the region, it would have attracted others as well: mestizos with no African ancestry, Indians from many parts of Charcas, and Europeans who had been marginalized by the state.²¹⁹

The issue this study has not taken up, but which profoundly affected the social status of persons of African descent in other parts of Latin America, was the role of

²¹⁸ There is a reference to such laborers in a 1624 letter about Vallegrande. In it, we learn that Escalante had since died and that the area around Vallegrande was largely deserted "Except for eight or ten persons, and these being disreputable mestizos and mulattos." The source, General Gonzalo Solís de Holguín is somewhat suspect, however. He and his descendants were involved in legal disputes with Escalante's heirs, and he may have been trying to undermine claims that Escalante had fulfilled his requirements to the viceroy and successfully settled the region. In J. Vázquez Machicado, no. 481, 53-54; Gutiérrez Brockington, 177.

²¹⁹ This last group could certainly have included *conversos*, as many Vallegrandinos currently claim. Again, see Roig and Reichsfeld.

pardos in local militias.²²⁰ A pardo militia defended Vallegrande's original settlers, and given the realities of the militarized frontier, local militias continued to be important both in Vallegrande and in the region. Viedma alludes to this in his report, mentioning the assistance of Vallegrande's militias in resisting the incursions of Portuguese troops from Brazil into eastern Charcas in the 1760s in addition to their role in combating the Chiriguano. One report from 1760 suggests that Vallegrande and Samaipata had 2,000 militiamen available for mobilization (a large number, given that Viedma would put the total population of the Vallegrande partido at about 15,000 twenty years later).²²¹ We also know that those who recruited soldiers for the campaign against the Portuguese specifically recruited both whites and pardos out of the Vallegrande region.²²² While Viedma was still intendant, Vallegrandino militiamen would be called out once more to put down a massive Chiriguano uprising in 1799-1800. In a manner reminiscent of the region's sixteenth-century military expeditions against the Chiriguano, this force included six hundred regular militiamen, four hundred and ten indigenous auxiliaries from local missions, and fifteen blacks.²²³ Finally, Melgar faithfully recorded the names of Vallegrande's fallen patriots during the wars of independence, including blacks from Brazil, both slave and freemen, Vallegrandino pardos, and other soldiers from the valleys whose *calidad* was not mentioned, who joined each other in death in Vallegrande's

²²⁰ Vinson, 5.

²²¹ "...Señor para disciplinar la milicia, y que tenia 2,000 hombres alistados fuera de la milicias de los Valles de Samaypata y el Vallegrande." Compañía de Jesús, vol. 8, 665.

²²² "Carta de don Alonso Berdugo a [don Julián de Arriaga?].—Dice que luego de recibir la Real orden para el desalojo de los portugueses de la Estacada de Santa Rosa la Vieja, Matogroso y Cuyabá, Salió a revistar los valles, escogiendo la gente más a propósito de blancos y pardos, y hecha esta diligencia en el Valle Grande, Chilón y Samipata, regresó a esta capital a prevenir lo necesario y adquirir noticias de Chiquitos y Mojos para saber sus tránsitos y situaciones ..." (990) December 29, 1763. Compañía de Jesús, vol. 8.

²²³ Viedma, 102; Placido Molina M., 77.

central plaza at the hands of royalist firing squads between 1812 and 1819.²²⁴ While such evidence makes it clear that a large proportion of the male population was active in the local militia, and that blacks and pardos participated in such units, it is unclear whether or not these militias were segregated into pardo and white units, or if all such units were largely integrated. It is also unclear if the pardos, negros, and mulattos mustered into such militias were exempt from tribute payments, which would certainly have raised the social and economic value of a pardo identity during the colonial period. While Viedma's report mentions total receipts for payments of indigenous tribute, there is no mention of tribute received from the free casta population in any part of Viedma's intendency.

One of the most important questions that this study leaves unanswered is whether or not the pardos of Vallegrande possessed an identity as pardos. Social memory involves the commemoration of historical events, and the particular events selected speak volumes about the storyteller. On its face, Viedma's interpretation of the caballeros pardos story asserts that some Vallegrandinos did identify as pardos during the time of his visit, otherwise that particular story would not have been told. The unique manner in which pardo came to signify local in Vallegrande, the large proportion of Vallegrandinos assigned to that category, and the powerful role played by the militia in the region have been used in other studies to explain how pardo identities were constructed in other regions, often similar frontier regions during the colonial era. But were the thirteen pardos who manned the fort of the "pardos libres" in the 1610s the caballeros pardos of the story, or was the story some reference to nobility? Could caballeros pardos merely reference the surnames of important families? Could the term have even been a coded

²²⁴ Melgar, 87-89.

reference to a Vallegrandino converso heritage? All of these theories have been put forward at various times. In colonial history, individuals and groups only become visible when their lives intersect with state or ecclesiastical business. Viedma's story about the *caballeros pardos* is so thoroughly colonized by the language of the state, given the complex layers of meaning that the term can be and has been given, that it is impossible to discern what meaning the Vallegrandino storyteller wished to give the term by recounting the tale to the intendant. Without this foothold into racial identity, it becomes difficult to even claim that such terms as *pardo* and *mestizo* meant anything at all to colonial Vallegrandinos apart from those colonial bureaucrats charged with recording state or ecclesiastical business. Instead, as Matthew Restall suggests, such terms may merely have been metaphors for those individuals who inhabited the liminal space in the white/Indian dichotomy that organized colonial society.²²⁵ Such a social frontier zone does indeed seem to be a wild and unknowable place.

²²⁵ Restall, *The Black Middle*, 95-96.

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