

'Of the richness of silver ores in this province...' (c.1639)

By Lic. Pedro Ramírez del Aguila

Pedro Ramírez del Aguila, *Noticias políticas de Indias y relación descriptiva de la Ciudad de La Plata metropoli de las Provincias de las Charcas y nuevo Reyno de Toledo en las occidentales del gran imperio del Pirú*. 1639. ed. Jaime Urioste Arana. Sucre: División de Extensión Universitaria, 1978, pp. 81-101. The original ms. is in the Lilly Library, University of Indiana. See the new 2017 edition.

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Of the richness of silver ores in this province, and other precious stones, and of how these are worked in the Villa of Potosi. Its description and greatness and of the commodities traded in this city and province.

It is a known and understood thing in all these kingdoms and all foreign ones, that these provinces of Charcas, Porco, Lipes, and Chichas are the richest of all these [kingdoms] and of all the world in silver, and one may say without exaggeration (encarecimiento) that they are shot through (lastradas) with silver and that what has been taken from them has enriched the world, and that which Potosi has given alone cannot be counted. To explain the greatness (grandezas) of that mountain and villa would be impossible without resorting to copious books and long discourses, which I will leave to others who with greater certainty will have made their description ex profeso. Only in general will I refer to a few so as not to leave this point truncated.

Potosi, in terms of trade, exchange, communication, and concourse of people, is the emporium of these highland provinces, and outside Lima it is the most populous city in these kingdoms. The inhabitants of that villa, it is commonly agreed, number just under 100,000 souls of all estates: Spaniards, Indians, blacks, and all the nations of the world. Its location is at the foot of the mountain called Potosi, a name that was given it because the Indian who discovered it was called thus, and his discovery took place in the year of the incarnation of Our Lord 1544, in an inhospitable site, rugged and rocky, dry and barren of all greenness of grass, flowers, and glens, because none of this [plant life] survives due to that extremely cold climate, much beaten by northern and southern winds, which are commonly called tomahabes, since the coldest of them come from certain punas near the town called Tomahavi. It [the Villa of Potosi] was founded there for the ease of working the ores, where the engines for milling and refining could be close by, these built alongside a gulch and creek between the mountain and town, where they have made a river-front (ribera) of those mills, which including those shut down by [visitador] el señor don Juan de Carvajal y Sande, still number more than one hundred, right next to one another, which run from the start of [the canal of] El Agua de Castilla to where they terminate in Antamarca, taking up a space of one Castilian league, in which there is so much machinery, trafago, and noise of Spanish overseers, refiners, carpenters and Indian apiris, morteros, palliris, repasiris, and other tradesmen that it is the greatest in the world and much to behold.

The constelacion [astrological location] of that villa is healthy, since although the climate is cold and dry the soil is moist, as the whole thing was once a swamp with much water and so

interconnected (y coligese) that one may dig anywhere into the surface of the soil, such that there are many wells with ample water, bad to drink but good for the animals that fatten themselves much with it. Its [the city's] layout is all on a slope, and in places it is steep; for this reason and due to the constipation of humors and heat of the stomach, for those who first arrive there find themselves short of breath and in order to not suffocate (ahogarse) must go up hill only little by little.

The living quarters of the Spaniards are in the heart of town and the Indians live in their parishes assigned and divided up by Viceroy don Francisco de Toledo when he visited that site, according to the Indian nations and provinces that come to work in the operation of the mines and mills, who are most numerous, since they are from all those found from Cuzco down this way and onto Tucuman. From each one there comes an Indian captain and governor, with their caciques and curacas, from their ayllus, to hand over each one their Indians to the mine administrators and owners of mines and mills according to the official allotment and grant made to each one, this being done with great accord and attention to services by the viceroy of these kingdoms. These caciques and Indians move each year in their round (remuda) or turn, which is called mita, which is the batallion of hardships, apremios, and extortions they heap upon these poor Indians; the Spaniards have an interest in getting their Indians handed over, the Indians have theirs in not being handed over, due to the impossibility they have in that since those assigned have run off, in which there enter in a thousand injustices in the form of substitute workers and others paid in silver goes directly into the purse of the mine owners, paid and quitted, sometimes by force by one who does not owe it; and with this obfuscation y revuelta de trampas y cambalaches one with another, they always carry on with continuous lawsuits; and practically every Monday one sees in the stocks in those plazas the caciques, and "in deposit" the wives of the Indians, and "in hock" the children of those in jail or missing, along with all the Indians en masse for the mita in an eternal chaos of confusion, fighting, and labors.

On the flanks of the great mountain of Potosi is another smaller one that appears to be its offspring and it is its son, called Guayna Potosi, which is to say Potosi, Jr. At the base of this Guayna the entire "machine" of these Indians assemble each Monday for the start of each work week; Here meet the corregidor, the veedores, the mine administrators and interested parties and all the mita captains who must hand off their workers and all the Indians who must then work; it is an army that which assembles there of more than 8,000 or 10,000 persons. In this muster they spend the whole day, and there the Indians sit drinking on the ground or on the wheels or millstones (muelas) of the various canchas, which are corrals, all divided by nation; and the muster completed with all the Indian bar men (barreteros) and apiris, who are those that carry the ore out of the mine, begin to climb up the mountain, beginning about four or five in the afternoon, very slowly, the majority of the Indians drunk or buzzed (azorrados) from the chicha they have drunk. They work the whole week, night and day, some 300 or 400 statures underground, more or less, according to the location; once placed in their work they carry it out with such gusto and merriment that they seem to be in a fiesta. The deadly risks of these mines are most numerous, from falls to live burial when pieces of the mountain collapse, such that many times it has occurred that 200 or 300 are buried, and only by the force of many miracles performed by Our Lady on their behalf have they escaped, but ordinarily there are broken legs, deaths, and despedazados; and even when great care is taken to maintain the mines and with great penalties levied against the mine owners who by their fault and carelessness a mine

collapses, it is impossible for there not to be disgraces since the mountain is mined by infinite parts by adits, mines, shafts, faces (frontones), suyos and pits, that it is like a harnero or sieve (criba). The Indians who have ordinarily worked, day and night without stopping, in the entrails of this mountain - barreteros, apiris, and palliris, number some three, four, or five thousand, for the ninety-six years since it was discovered; they go inside on Saturdays on the night of their work in strings with their little lamps (candelillas) lit, which are visible from town and appear like religious processions. On Sunday mornings their parish priests gather them together for doctrine and to hear mass, by their fiscales and guatacamayos, which are bailiffs (alguaciles), for which they suffer much because they are drunk or asleep for lack of rest from the previous nights of work and vigil, and although the priests try to make them comply with the duties of their office, it is impossible to get them to make up for the many shortcomings found in all this.

After mass they go to receive their payments which the mine owners place in their own hands, and later they go to drink it all up and spend it. Each mita Indian (indio de cedula) is paid each week two and a half pesos, and if he is a free hire (alquilado), which they call minga, it is seven and a half pesos of eight reales. These poor men have no other relief than to drink, such an irreparable vice among them that it either kills them or it has to be allowed to them as they do without the remedy of mending (? o se les ha de consentir como se hace sin remedio de enmienda); as punishment, they spend all they gain in this, especially those who work in that villa [of Potosi].

The parishes and churches found there are the following: the main church with three priests for Spaniards, two for "piezas," which are blacks and yanacona Indians in the service of Spaniards, two sextons, and 100 extra priests (sacerdotes clerigos sobresalientes) who live each day on a pittance of 2 pesos each. All these ministers are sustained by the obventions that fall to them (as they do not have tithes), and these are so substantial that each Spanish curate is worth more than 3,000 pesos, and those of "piezas" a little less than 2,000 pesos, and the sacristies (sexton posts) more than 3,000 pesos, which is more than the curates. The main church's construction is very rich, with a nave covered with cedar latticework, arco toral, and four side chapels, and with three portals of stonework, very richly worked and of great beauty and cost. The toral and that of the chapels of Santa Ana and Las Animas, which are to each side, are all gilded top to bottom with great curiosity and art, and likewise the chapels. The retable of the main altar is among the best of this kingdom and even of Spain, of a cost of 50,000 pesos, and this while still lacking its last part. The Sacristy is most sumptuous and very rich in worked silver ornaments. The service of this church, the authority and majesty and greatness with which they celebrate the divine offices and feasts, particularly that of Corpus and renovations of each month, is without doubt the greatest in the world, and the number-one parish in it, as regards the concourse of priests and townsfolk, devotion, sermons, masses, and administration of the sacraments. The expenditure on wax is the greatest known, such that there is nothing like it in all of Spain, even in its richest cathedrals. There enter into that church each year in obventions, alms, masses, and confraternity payments more than 40,000 pesos in cash reales, without collecting a single rent. The church has a fine tower with many bells, and an excellent choir and baptistry; in the cemetery is a large chapel of Our Lady of Copacabana of the Indies, expertly adorned, and in the part that faces the plaza, by two angles, many merchants' shop fronts, the rents of which pay for construction. The hangings, pictures, and paintings in the church are most rich and of great price and value, for the whole body of the church, of velvets and golden fabrics, many large and very rich silver lamps in

all the altars and chapels; on the main altar there are three, the one in the middle having cost 12,000 pesos and it is so large that it cannot be raised and lowered except by winches made specially for it; the monstrance is of very fine silver and very large, of a curious working and architecture, with a price of 30,000 pesos; andas of silver, tabernacles, quiones y frontales all of plata maciza, it is much that is kept in that church and throughout the villa. The church has thirty yanacona Indians who serve as minor sextons, acolytes, monacillos, porters, perreros, bell ringers, barrenderos; and there are many other qualities and features of greatness such that it would be prolix to refer to them all in detail. This is the only Spanish parish in Potosi.

There follows in second place San Lorenzo de los Carangas, a very fine church and rich with retable, ornaments, worked silver, paintings and wall hangings, and Indian parish; in third place is the church of Santa Barbara; in fourth that of the Conception of the Mercedarian friars; fifth is San Pedro, of the Dominican friars, which houses an image of Our Miraculous Lady in an most richly outfitted chapel, for whom there is much devotion in that villa; in sixth that of Santiago; in seventh that of San Pablo; in eighth that of San Bernardo; in ninth that of Copacabana, where the image of this advocacy is housed, of many miracles and based on a very grand confraternity of Spanish miners; in tenth that of San Juan; in eleventh that of San Francisco el Chico, as they call it, of Dominican friars; in twelfth that of San Cristobal, of Mercedarian friars; in thirteenth that of San Benito, with a very rich church curiously adorned thanks to the great diligence and devout vigilance of its present priest, maestro Hernando Diaz, creole of this city, mirror of priests in pious zeal, saintliness, doctrine, comiseration (miseracion) with his Indians and generosity with the poor, a person worthy of all praise and reward; in whose parish he supports an enclosure of devote Indian damsels, where they keep themselves to serve God in the manner of a convent with its chapel and mayor who governs them in their cloister and enclosure; where I judge that they much serve Our Lord, and the Indian women apply themselves so well to this life, with such honesty, modesty, and devotion that they do better than the most spiritual nuns, and this should serve as the base upon which they are allowed to live in religion; in fourteenth place [among Potosi's parish churches], San Sebastian; in fifteenth that of San Martin; which in all make up the fifteen parishes named for the ancientness they have in the processions, over which giving out and conserving it there have been great debates and lawsuits. The one is for Spaniards, the other fourteen for Indians; of these four are of religious orders, and ten with secular clerics. All these parishes have good churches and temples, with fine service of ornaments and worked silver; in all is seated the Most Holy and they perform great fiestas at Corpus and the feast days of the confraternities, which in each parish number seven, eight, or ten, to which the Indians attend with much affection and devotion without mentioning expenditures in silver; it is such that a single Indian spends on the lietenancy (alferazgo) of these confraternities 200, 300, 500, or even 1,000 pesos, which although it is ordered in the constitutions of the synod that these costs be excused, they themselves want to do this volunarily without anyone ordering them, as they say it is an honor and the same is known in their villages.

There are five monasteries: of Santo Domingo with its church and nave, with crucero and chapels, very costly and rich, covered in cedar latticework and the same above the choir, with great richness in ostentatious retables, hangings, ornaments and worked silver. The monastery (casa) is not yet finished. There are supported there some thirty religious, rather more than less, by ample alms.

That of San Francisco has a very lustrous and rich church with a nave covered in cedar, of gilt latticework and pine cones (pinas) and artesones, with many and rich chapels. Its adornment is most costly and rich in paintings, retables, hangings, lamps, ornaments, and worked silver. The monastery (casa) is very good, with a very costly cloister with stone arches and pillars. Supported there are forty religious, sometimes more and at other times fewer, on alms and chaplaincies.

The monastery of San Agustin is of the same luster and size, very rich in church and monastery, with twenty-four or more religious. They support themselves very well with alms and chaplaincies.

That of La Merced is of equal cost and richness in terms of church and monastery. It supports more than twenty religious with alms.

The Jesuit colegio in in whole and in parts a church and house of the most grand, which exceeds the rest, as it has many rents to sustain it, it ordinarily has in it thirty subjects.

There are two hospitals, the Royal One, for Indians and Spaniards, very rich and with many rents, whose foundation and expenditures have been written about carefully by a person by whose hand has passed with all satisfaction and truth, to whose relation I refer. The other is of San Juan de Dios, which is supported by alms, with a good church and house, and in which they cure some ill persons.

There are other shrine chapels (ermitas) on the Cerro, one on Guayna, another by the reservoir of Cari Cari, another for San Bartolome in the Narrows (la Angostura, below town towards Tarapaya), another at the foot of the cerro, next to Santiago, for San Roque.

All these churches are well built and very well adorned, and all the rest of the parishes have their Indian cantors and minstrels, and in the main church a very good and excellent chapel of Spanish cantors.

The concourses in the festival processions are very grand; the greatness, devotion, and richness of their celebration is the greatest in the kingdom, because there are gathered its richest in jewels, silver, gold, hangings, paintings, and all that which is of greatest richness and curiosity. There is generally in that villa much devotion and much affinity for the things pertaining to the divine service and they give tremendous alms, not to mention other costs that may seem superfluous, so much so that there are those who give three, four, eight, or ten thousand pesos in alms as if it were a real; as that place generates (cria) some souls of magnanimous princes, bountiful (dadivosos) and liberal.

The outfitting of the people of that villa, the presentation (porte) and clothing, is the most costly, most elegant and courtly of these provinces, as much for men as for women, of which there are some very beautiful ones, both locally born and among the great many who go from this kingdom to search for their fortunes, so loaded with jewels and pearls, so wrapped in lamas and fine fabrics that each one seems to be a queen, and this is so common even among the most

ordinary that even on the mestizas and Indian women in their outfits one sees all this gala y bizzarria.

The houses are very finely built, both upper and lower floors, although the majority are roofed with thatch, but this with such curiosity that one does not miss the tile. Their interiors are very rich and costly, with the adornments of wall hangings, desks, paintings, beds and estrados, the richest of the kingdom; the service of slaves, vajillas, and silver plate are of great value and much abundance, in which one finds many great sums of capital (hacienda) invested.

As for the supply of that villa, in terms of necessities and other commodities, it is the largest and most copious of these kingdoms; there lies the granary of all the best foods, the bodega for the fine wines of Arequipa, Ica, La Nazca, Pisco, and of those of these provinces; there they carry the best fruits, and they take there from here all about, and from 100 or 200 leagues away their conserves, plus fresh fish and that from the sea; there is the warehouse of all the commodities that travel to this kingdom, because since there is the fountain of silver and wealth, in entering that town each one will profit from what he takes to sell, with new reales in hand, and thus everything ends up there and there is a surplus of everything.

The greater part of the common folk is made up of unattached persons and of all the nations of the world, and from that region, and of soldados escoterros who go in search of a life, and as people without roots, nor more than the cape on their shoulders, in order to eat and make friends they foment factions, try to prove their valor, divide themselves into parties by nation, confederate themselves according to diverse opinions, such that there are always disputes, wounds, and deaths. Not everything here can resist the power of the magistrates, no embargante, as there are many and very vigilant and they carry out extraordinary punishments, as one may see with one recently done, in which for one murder seven were hanged; but in spite of this, not a month ago, don Juan de Cespedes, a town councilman of that villa having gone to apprehend a criminal, was given so many wounds he died, and they fired at the lieutenant corregidor with an arquebus at midday, killing his horse as well as a bailiff; and other similar things happen each day. At night, one may not leave home safely without risk some mishap; not long ago they tried to evict the rootless folk, but the next day they woke up to posters all around saying they should not attempt this or the whole place would be burned to ashes, and thus the order was not carried out despite having been issued by the viceroy.

The "Empedradillo" (cobble-stone square) is famous in that town; it is a space that makes a block on an angle from the main plaza, just above it, well cobbled and in view of the rest, of the width of a street likewise paved, to which is attached like a facade a whole walkway along that block with hat shops, to which for the afternoon sun, and for shade at midday, is the greatest concourse of the whole plaza, and it is always full of people. On that spot there have been many murders and fights, and likewise they consider it the asylum (asilo) and space for bravery, and thus circulates the proverb that a man is not truly valiant if he has not walked the Empedradillo of Potosi.

The number of houses of Spaniards in that city is four or five thousand, that of the houses of Indians, which are mostly small, low, and covered with ichu grass, some twelve to fourteen thousand.

There are many fountains throughout the villa bringing water piped in from far away; there is not much lack of it despite not having a river or creek full of it to drink.

The four or five reservoirs they have constructed so as to mill ores year round in the refineries, which rely on water power, is a grand thing to behold, having cost many thousands of pesos to put them in the state they are now in; of which mention was made on this particular in the relation I noted and thus I excuse myself.

In that villa is located the storehouse and deposit of treasury of His Majesty, which collects from all these provinces the quintos, mercury sales, tributes, sales of office, sales taxes, indulgences (bulas), unoccupied episcopal rents (vacantes de obispos), donations for the king's wars (donativos), forced pledges (graciosos servicios), and other things, with a very grave tribunal of three royal officials: factor, contador, and treasurer, jueces privativos of the royal treasury, from which the greater part of all that goes to Spain, and they also pay the salaries of the Audiencias of Lima, this one (Charcas), and Chile, plus those of governors, corregidores, and many priests among the Indians, which amounts to a great sum of money. They have there some very magnificent and ostentatious treasury buildings with living quarters for all the ministers, who are many and who make very great salaries. There is the smeltery for bars, in which they smelt each year from five to six thousand bars, of more than a thousand pesos each one, of which one fifth pertains to His Majesty.

Likewise there is a mint in that villa, quite grand, run with great labor and bustle by royal employees and black laborers, under charge of a royally appointed treasurer with jurisdiccion privativa within it, this being an office of very great consideration and which is worth each year more than 8,000 pesos in rents. They manufacture there millions in coin each year in reales de a 8, de a cuatro, de a dos, sencillos, y medios reales, which is that which circulates in all these kingdoms and not any other of vellon.

The government of that villa is by one corregidor, two ordinary councilmen, a provincial of the Hermandad, an alguacil mayor, the town council, very grave and authorized, of 24 veinticuatro, whose offices are sold at ten or twelve thousand pesos ensayados and beyond this many lesser offices. The corregidorship is among the best posts in the entire kingdom, with a salary of 3,000 pesos ensayados and the power (mano) to make 100,000; his main title is as corregidor of this city of La Plata, where he is obliged to live six months each year and the other six in Potosi; but he is never here [in La Plata] due to the many things he has to do in that villa where he also has his lieutenant, and he is also captain-general of all these provinces, with jurisdiction over that of all the other corregidores in matters of the mita, for whose shortcomings he may apprehend, punish, imprison, and send other corregidores, it is a post that grants him regency as great lord and entitled.

I will put a period on this description of the Imperial Villa (titled thus by privilege and merced of the emperor) de Potosi, giving way to others that have been done more copiously and certified, by saying that that machine is un epilogo, una cifra y agredado de grandeza y riqueza y que puede frisar con la Octava Maravilla, and the most useful, beneficial, and most important place

for the service of its king possessed by any prince or monarchy in the world, as it alone enriches him and serves him more than others are by an entire and very powerful kingdom.

Taking the discussion to the description of the other mineral deposits of these provinces, I shall say that the one at Porco, which was first before Potosi, was extremely rich in its beginnings. It is seven leagues distant from Potosi, and there is where the Pizarros stayed: Hernando, Francisco, and Gonzalo Pizarro, and one may see the ruins of their houses sown with salt, and where their grandezas had their beginnings, great fiestas and games of canas, their horses shod with shoes of silver. That camp is now exhausted because the mines hit water, although not for a lack of trying. That camp has 500 mita Indians (indios de cedula) yet there is only one mill in operation, the rest having been abandoned and fallen to ruin.

The mineral deposits of Oruro, Turco, Berenguela, Berenguelilla, Yaco, San Pedro de Buena Vista, Choque Cayara, Maragua, Guariguari, San Cristobal de Lipes, Santa Isabel, Chorolque, San Vicente, and the new discovery of Tomahavi, are all wasted and poor, along with those of Piquisa, Colavi, and Turusnachi; and they just sustain themselves by fits and starts, now dead, now resuscitated, but there is never a lack of effort in them, so as not to lose the mills that have been built in each, and these are sustained by poor yields of forty or fifty pounds, which in the end are of some importance, because many small streams make up the great river of Potosi, for which all are tributaries and all enter.

The mineral deposits of Chocaya, so famous in these times, are already much diminished as the mines have hit water and it is too costly to drain them, even when in very rich ore; some five or six years ago, not long after their discovery, they were so famous and held in such high regard that Potosi itself was nearly abandoned, being thirty leagues away, and the place was populated with such haste and urgency that within one year there emerged and was formed a town of 2,000 inhabitants, with all the great noise of the mine works, plus commerce and contracting. This is now all cooled down (resfriado), and although the town is still there all the people went back to Potosi, it being no small thing to return from the land of promise (? que no le importo poco para volver del parasismo). The mines of that camp are still worked and a drought is hoped for so that the water might recede, because this winter has been quite rainy and has caused much flooding in the mines.

The main trade of all the Spanish persons who come to this land and live in it, the most rich, noble, and gentlemanly, is that of being a "minero," and nearly everyone tries to prospect and work mines, since this land is so rich in them and one can become rich so quickly in finding them, many try in this way to search for improvements and even the most principal persons engage in this, because no one, although it is much [work], looks down on entering a mine with a familia (which is a small hammer) to take out the ore one may; nor to prospect on the hilltops, nor to follow the veins. To locate these veins is a gift of God, which he gives to whom he pleases, and to work them is the most noble trade as the fruit of this labor is the best of all in the land; this is not a damaging occupation, as it does not preclude the working of planting and agriculture, nor the utility of commerce, rather it foments everything and with it things grow find an outlet and sales of all products increase, such that silver reaches all hands and everyone gets rich. In Italy, Germany, and other northern parts, although there are many mines, they may not be worked freely for reasons of state and the policies that are there judged convenient, so as not



to impede the working of the land and other things that they have carefully thought out, but in this province all activities would cease and your Majesty judges them [the mines] as necessary for the aid and preservation of his estates, and thus orders and charges his governors to make folks search out and work mines and give much honor to those who understand how to do this, granting them the privilege of hidalgos and keeping them from being imprisoned for debt, and making certain their mines and mills and materials will not be sold off to liquidate them; such that the miners and azogueros, who are those who have a mill, are much encouraged and are valuable to the royal service, more than so many other vassals he has in his realms, such that only one azoguero may yield to the royal treasury, in quintos and mercury purchases, more than a city, reaching as much as 80,000 or 100,000 pesos, and they make loans of 50,000 up to 100,000 pesos for the dispatch of the annual fleets, which they pay punctually; and in the pledges and "gracious donations" it is they who participate, as all these are very considerable services and worthy of the favors and exceptions given and conceded to them.

Each day one sees in this land great entrepreneurs (grandes venturones) in the matter of getting rich by mining, and he who yesterday was shirtless has tomorrow 500,000 pesos and the grandezza of a great lord, although we have seen that within a short time many lose out due to vanities and excessive spending during their prosperity. The azogueros comport themselves like great lords in terms of the lustre of their persons, houses, and families, and their spirits as generous as powerful princes. There are azogueros who have weekly expenditures of 7,000 or 8,000 pesos in cash reales to maintain their houses and the credit of their mines and refineries, and that produce forty and fifty silver ingots [pinas] each week, each of these weighing 40 marks, worth some 250 pesos. Many covet these ingots and the interest that comes from them, since for each one sold to make bars one earns 12 or 14 pesos, and they make deals with the azogueros such that they give them all the ingots they produce in exchange for payment in reales for all weekly expenses. Yet it is not just anyone who can serve as creditor for these, since as expenses are certain and the ingots uncertain, the azogueros are always indebted to the creditors to the tune of 50,000 pesos, and some up to 100,000 pesos, such that in their whole lives they will never see themselves clear (zafos) or free of them, because many azogueros do not comply as agreed in their contracts to give over all ingots produced, hiding some to cover their extraordinary expenditures. There are others who are more stable, who fund themselves, and these are greatly enriched and go about with great surplus, and who do not purchase mercury on credit but rather pay up front.

The souls this silver inspires are extraordinary, and their machines like nothing seen before, and each day they dream of becoming lords of the world. There was an azoguero in Potosi who said: "The Pope in Rome, the king in Spain, and Domingo Beltran in Potosi," as that was his name. There are azogueros who buy 500 pesos worth of shad, a thousand pesos worth of apples, 2,000 pesos in fish as if spending only four reales, and who have 50,000 pesos spent on provisions and more; another who, for having his suit properly fitted, gave the tailor by way of thanks a chest full of ore, which yielded 8,000 pesos and allowed him to go home [to Europe]; and other magnanimous acts of this sort and many, such that they have supported many "soldiers" and poor folk. There is an azoguero right now in Chocaya, Gonzalo Diaz Montero, Portuguese, who in three years has given more than 200,000 pesos to his friends, the poor, and the needy, all graciously; and he gave as alms for one mass 2,000 pesos, and to his godsons, priests, 1,000 pesos and more, and he has performed other grandezas worthy of a prince, which he is in his way

of being, his magnanimity and largesse. And of this sort there are and have been many persons who have traded ostentatiously, eating to the sound of bagpipes and entertaining 30 or 40 guests at a time, serving them on huge silver table ware. Francisco de Villalobos, whom they called El Rico, lived in Porco where he had his properties and mills, and when he came to Potosi his wife sent food to him cooked in Porco, and it arrived in Potosi hot, even though Porco is seven leagues away, pues es materia de fuegos, son gruesisimos los suyos (?). Diego de Aviles, an azoguero in Chichas, played pintas in Potosi at 1,000 pesos a hand. Pedro de Mondragon bet a working mill head, worth more than 70,000 pesos, on a game of roulette (suerte de perinola) with Juan Porcel de Padilla, who exclaimed: "I say!" and before the roulette wheel stopped, it was stopped (la barajo) by don Pedro Zores de Ulloa, who was corregidor of Potosi, who happened to be present, and he said: "Play, your mercies, for silver, but do not wager your honor." These same men, and many others, played for 10,000 or 12,000 pesos, to see who pulled the longest straw from the roof of a house thatched in ichu grass. These and many other crazy things, that here may included among so many expenditures, have been done and are still done by the azoguero and other rich men in this land, due to the great surplus created by the mines, and many of these same men have been known to die in the hospitals extremely poor; and one may see an azoguero who has 200,000 or 300,000 pesos of debt spending as if he had them all to waste and he suffers for it and the earth takes him. (y lo sufre y lleva la tierra).

The exhalations of this silver breed such grandiose thoughts and such ardent spirits that one may see one of these miners, with his bare outfit of rough cloth, mal trapillo, so maquinista and rich in his belief as if he were a Midas, a greater and more valiant gentleman than El Cid, without taking account of anyone for any reason, and not permitting anyone to attempt to get the better of him, because the equality of this land is such that there is no master who dares to treat his servant with anything less than great respect; they are all gentlemen even as they die of hunger. It happened in Potosi that a principal individual, a rich mill operator named Juan Ordonez de Villaguiran, who because his majordomo, one Gongora [illegible], mistreated some Indians in his presence, he pushed him back (le rempujo) and put his hand on his face and told him never to do such a thing again in his presence, a thing felt so keenly by the servant that he left soon after and took to trying to kill his master by ambush (en acechanzas) for more than six years, and when these were up, upon passing down the street at midday, [the servant] hidden in a merchant shop fired a pistol at his master and pulled out his sword and gave him a mortal wound, from which he died the next day. They apprehended the servant and while taking him to be hanged the same day for this crime he gloried in the great deed he had done with this stabbing, and he did not want to confess until he knew [his master] was dead, such that so that he would confess as the foot of the gallows it was necessary to falsely ring the church bells so that when he asked, "for whom do they toll," they said for Juan Ordonez de Villaguiran, and thus when the criminal heard this he was much contented and said: "God forgive you," and what an honored man he was, and with this he confessed and was hanged. I saw in the royal treasury building of Potosi, in the time of the vicunas, there being holed up there don Felipe Manrique [the embattled corregidor] with a guard of 200 men, he being general, ordered a soldier of the guardian corps to carry out a certain errand, telling him: "Go do this." And the soldier felt this so strongly, what the general said of him, that he responded that he was not such a person who should be treated in that manner, and that he must be treated well, and he let out other shouts (roncas) that left us with no other means of getting the good gentleman to calm himself and those of us who were with him. This equality, presumptuousness, and spirit is caused by the generosity and richness of

this land, and such a great discovery in it, that even those who return to Spain long for it, and they come back as we have seen on many occasions; what is certain is that it is the mother of foreigners and a great provider for all, and if here one finds friends, comforts, capital (caudales), rich marriages, and many great fortunes, and "Ubi bonum ibi patria" says the proverb that describes the goodness of this land and the magnetism of its constellation. There is no Spaniard here who serves as a lackey or page, except to an archbishop or [audiencia] president, since these jobs there serve instead blacks, Indians, or mestizos.

There are many gold-bearing mineral deposits in this province, rivers and creeks where they wash and recover many very fine nuggets, but they are not worked except in Guanacani and the Andes [eastern lowland] jurisdiction of this audiencia jurisdiction, since there gold is more copious, and because in this kingdom there is more wealth and promise to be had in working mines of silver, such that a silver mine is worth more than one of gold, the opposite of what occurred in Jerusalem in the time of King Solomon, where the Holy Bible says, Kings 3:10, that there was no silver nor was it esteemed as a thing of value in the days of Solomon: "Non erat argentum, nec alicuius pretii putabatur in diebus Salomonis," although there was plenty of it in Jerusalem, common as rocks, as noted in chap. 9 of Book 2 of the Paralipom: "Tantumque copiam praebebat argenti in Jerusalem quasi lapidum," pondered so wisely by the lord Dr Juan de Solorzano Pereira in his most erudite treatise *De Indiarum Jure*, book 1, chap.13, No.63, in order to prove that the most wise king [Solomon] was the most powerful and rich who ever was and ever will be in any century, and reducing to account that of those times and the immenseness of their riches, it is said at the end of the number (that of Pineda, *De Reb. Salom.* Book 4, August Toseniell, in *Annal. sac.* tom 2. ann. 3043 n.4 p.46) that the treasures of King David were 123 million (units not given), and those of Solomon were ten times more, which would be 1,230,000,000, a seemingly innumerable quantity; but without exaggeration that Potosi and counting several others in this province, since its discovery 96 years ago has given as much to its king and to Spain; since it is certain that each year there have gone out of it, in royal as well as private purses, more than 12 million, from which one can approach the said sum, which for our sins are today enjoyed by foreign nations in emulation of the Lady of all [nations], which Our Lord has desired to be the most Christian Spain; and he laughs at some, the said Pineda (ubi. c.19), who in envy compare the riches of certain princes of our times with those of Solomon, as does Torre Blanca (in *Epitom. Lib. de Mag. in defen.* c.4) and that all the costs and expenditures on building and support of the temple of Jerusalem made by Solomon exceeded the riches of all kings and beyond all human admiration, as is also said in the writings of Arias Montano in his books, *De Templi Fabrica*.

There are also deposits of mercury of which many have been assayed on the spot and in many places they have found them very good, but since that of Huancavelica is so rich they have left those around here alone, although there is no lack of curious individuals who attempt to develop this process, which has been found extremely difficult in the ores located in this province. (goes on about PIGMENTS, medicinal stones, etc.)