


ARTICLE

To Keep the Land Populated. Localising Empire and Constructing Locality, in the Sixteenth-Century Charcas Frontier

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Abstract

The present article studies the foundation of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya in the jurisdiction of the Real Audiencia de Charcas in the second half of the sixteenth century, framing the event as part of the wider process of incorporation of new geographies into the Spanish monarchy. The documentation analysed describes the complex negotiations among various agents organised around networks of patronage and hierarchies, including Spanish frontier captains and their men as well as the Andean indigenous communities of San Lucas de Payacollo and the Guaraní-speaking *Chiriguanaes*. The article provides some insights into the manner in which frontier spaces of the Catholic monarchy were politically constructed and equipped with relations and institutions in the late sixteenth century.

Keywords: Charcas; Chiriguanaes; Spanish empire; political cultures; San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya

Introduction

Any curious visitor to downtown Buenos Aires in Argentina can find the Town Hall only a few metres away from Mayo square and the presidential palace or “Pink House”. The Town Hall’s White Room, continuing with the colour theme, hosts a painting that is permanently on display that symbolises the city’s humble origins (see [figure 1](#)).

Painted by Spanish artist José Moreno Carbonero (1858–1942), “*La Fundación de Buenos Aires en 1580*” (The Founding of Buenos Aires in 1580) dates from 1923 and, as the title suggests, recreates the starting point of the city on 11 June 1580, centred on the Basque conquistador Juan de Garay. The painting became a symbol of the city and was popularised through school manuals during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship. It even had a brief appearance on a banknote that went into circulation in Argentina marking the city’s four hundredth anniversary. This painting is also product of nineteenth-century historiography that, based on a literal reading of historical records of the establishment of cities and towns, romanticised these events in the collective memory through visual

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Figure 1. José Moreno Carbonero (1858–1942), “La Fundación de Buenos Aires en 1580” (The Founding of Buenos Aires in 1580) (1923).

Source https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Jos%C3%A9_Moreno_Carbonero_-_Fundaci%C3%B3n_de_Buenos_Aires.jpg.

representations, sculptures, and a narrative that describes conquistadors as heroes and town foundations as the product of European civilisation in the New World. This historiography tried to establish a connection between the Liberal and pro-European national states in Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and a reimagined and distant Hispanic and colonial past. This was briefly revived during the military Junta of the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹

By the mid-twentieth century, a new historiography, focused on institutions and concerned with the construction of national states in Latin America, looked at town foundations with a different emphasis. It studied their *cabildos* (city councils) and their role in the construction of an administrative and political apparatus in the colonies. This scholarship sees cities as political bodies (*civitas*), seeds of a Colonial State and key players in its organisation in Spanish America.² Urban centres thus became enclaves of Spanish colonisation surrounded by indigenous peoples. Both this approach and the one epitomised in the painting by Moreno Carbonero pose nonetheless some challenges. On the one hand, they ignore the complexities of indigenous agency in the construction of urban spaces because they simply oppose the Spanish versus indigenous peoples. In this comparison, natives frequently appear either as a workforce or as a threat to the stability of these new towns. They also assume a single Spanish agency and are unable to understand

¹ An example of this narrative can be found in the introduction by Argentine historian Roberto Levillier to one of his documentary compilations titled “Santiago del Estero. Cabeza de provincia en el siglo XVI” and the classic work by García (1900). Roberto Levillier, *Gobernación de Tucumán. Correspondencia de los cabildos en el siglo XVI*. (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1918), XIII–XXIII; Agustín García, *La ciudad indiana (Buenos Aires desde 1600 hasta mediados del siglo XVIII)* (Buenos Aires: Angel Estrada y Cia, 1900).

² Constantino Bayle, *Los cabildos seculares en la América española*. (Madrid: Sapientia, 1954); John Preston Moore, *The Cabildo in Peru under the Hapsburgs. A Study in the Origins and Powers of the Town Council in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1530-1700* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954).

the multiple interests among the Europeans involved with town foundations. Finally, they retrospectively build a colonial State, as the predecessor of the liberal states, which constitutes an anachronism. They also focus on these towns' initial times without providing an explanation over their post-foundation situation.

The scholarship of the last four decades on the southeast of Charcas, in present-day Bolivia, which is the geography that this article studies, began addressing this, understanding the district's frontier, and therefore its towns, as a permeable space with complex social dynamics.³ The pioneering works of Saignes, followed by those of Combès, prepared this path through an analysis of frontier indigenous peoples and their interaction with Tahuantinsuyu first and the Spanish after.⁴ Saignes's studies were contemporary of García Recio's own work on Santa Cruz de la Sierra and the creation of a "frontier society".⁵ Both themes continued in later works. The book by Gutiérrez Brockington on Mizque also follows these ideas.⁶ The unpublished theses of Scholl and Weaver Olson on the same frontier, studied more carefully such interactions and the creation of "republics of lost peoples" which combined the Spanish, *mestizos* and natives, in the margins of Charcas.⁷ More recently, the works of Oliveto and Revilla Orias highlighted the importance that indigenous slavery and other forms of indentured servitude had in that space.⁸ Finally, Oliveto's recent book on Tarija provides a case study, describing the complexities of the expansion of Tahuantinsuyu and the Spanish into the district, and the challenges that both processes posed to its indigenous peoples.⁹ Town foundation has been the subject of a recent article on the creation and destruction of San Miguel de la Laguna, also in Charcas, as a process built on a partnership between the Guaraní-speaking Chiriguanaes¹⁰ and the Spanish in the town.¹¹ Building on these contributions, the present article proposes an analysis of the establishment of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya as a collectively driven process which, involved Spanish captains

³ Lia Guillermina Oliveto, "Las mejores y más fértiles tierras del Perú' Apuntes sobre la historiografía de la frontera suroriental de Charcas (siglo XVI)," *Autoctonía Revista de Ciencias Sociales e Historia* 4, no. 2 (July, 2020): 236.

⁴ Thierry Saignes, *Historia del pueblo chiriguano*, (Lima, Perú: La Paz, Bolivia: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos; Embajada de Francia en Bolivia: Plural Editores, 2007); Isabelle Combès, *Etno-historias del Isoso: Chané y chiriguano en el Chaco boliviano (siglos XVI a XX)* (La Paz: Institut Français d'Etudes Andines, 2005).

⁵ José María García Recio, *Análisis de una sociedad de frontera: Santa Cruz de la Sierra en los siglos XVI y XVII*, (Sevilla: Excelentísima. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1988).

⁶ Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington, *Blacks, Indians, and Spaniards in the Eastern Andes: Reclaiming the Forgotten in Colonial Mizque, 1550-1782* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

⁷ Jonathan Scholl, "At the Limits of Empire: Incas, Spaniards, and the Ava-Guarani (Chiriguanaes) on the Charcas-Chiriguana Frontier, Southeastern Andes. (1450s-1620s)." (PhD Dissertation, Florida, US, University of Florida, 2015), 316; Nathan Weaver Olson, "A Republic of Lost Peoples: Race, Status, and Community in the Eastern Andes of Charcas at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century" (PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2017), 5.

⁸ Lia Guillermina Oliveto, "Piezas, presos, indios habidos en buena guerra, cimarrones y fugitivos. Notas sobre el cautiverio indígena en la frontera oriental de Tarija en el siglo XVI," in *Vivir en los márgenes. Fronteras en América Colonial: Sujetos, prácticas e identidades, siglos XVI-XVIII*. (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, UNAM, 2021), 29-66; Paola A. Revilla Orias, *Entangled Coercion: African and Indigenous Labour in Charcas (16th-17th Century)*, (Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020).

⁹ Lia Guillermina Oliveto, *Historia de los valles de Tarija. Conquistas, territorialidades y relaciones interétnicas, siglos XV al XVII* (Tarija: Fondo Editorial del Consejo Municipal de Tarija, 2023).

¹⁰ To stay loyal to historical records and avoid confusion with present-day indigenous communities, in this article, indigenous peoples are named as they appear on sixteenth and seventeenth century documents. However, Tahuantinsuyu is used, instead of Inca Empire, as a less Europeanised denomination of the pre-Hispanic polity that ruled over "the four quarters of its world".

¹¹ Mario Graña Taborelli, "Speaking the Language of Friendship: Partnerships in the Political Construction of the Late Sixteenth-Century South-East Charcas Frontier," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 42, no. 5 (October 2023): 721-33.

and their men, indigenous peoples classed as “enemies” and “friends”, the Royal Court of Justice (Real Audiencia) in La Plata, the Andean chiefs with communities settled in towns in the frontier, and religious orders. This process reflected multilayered interests and involved appropriations and reappropriations of resources, meanings, and a geography, which were conducted by individuals and groups through their daily activities.¹² The frontier, “an overlooked place with overlooked peoples” as Velasco Murillo recently suggested,¹³ was therefore constructed as a relational space, with the intervention of agents within and outside, and it was built from above and below, at the same time. The importance of such frontier towns in the economy of Potosí, the Spanish Crown’s “jewel”, which relied on their resources and supported their safety, makes the study of the establishment of these urban spaces paramount to understanding the social and political dynamics in the whole of Charcas. Any development in the southeast frontier of the district could potentially disrupt the activities in Potosí and have consequences on the finances of the monarchy. Although on the margins of empire, the presence of Potosí gave Charcas its own weight in the global polity.

As part of the same town foundation process, the frontier began to be politically equipped with institutions, such as cabildos and *corregidores* or royal officials, and a whole range of personal, legal, and political relations, gradually adopting its own identity as a territory of the Catholic monarchy, product of the exchanges of the groups and individuals involved.¹⁴ This process adapted or “localised the monarchy” and its institutions and offices, creating “locality” or a unique political community, at the same time.¹⁵ This article also suggests that the whole process was shaped by a practice of government centred on *iurisdicchio* (jurisdiction), understood in its early modern meaning as the authority to proclaim and exercise justice, and the administration of royal rewards; as well as “empowering interactions” created through engagements in communicative processes which were the result of diverse and reciprocal interests.¹⁶ The case of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya offers a unique opportunity to understand this process due to the

¹² Tamar Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 8.

¹³ Dana Velasco Murillo and Robert C. Schwaller, eds., *Overlooked Places and Peoples: Indigenous and African Resistance in Colonial Spanish America, 1500-1800*, (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2024).

¹⁴ Antonio Manuel Hespanha, *La gracia del derecho. Economía de la cultura en la Edad Moderna* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1993), 103; Carlos Garriga, “Patrias criollas, plazas militares. Sobre la América de Carlos IV.,” in *La América de Carlos IV*, vol. 1, Cuadernos de Investigaciones y Documentos (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones de Historia del Derecho, 2006), 11; Darío Barriera, *Historia y justicia: Cultura, política y sociedad en el Río de La Plata* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2019), 219.

¹⁵ Following Appadurai on this: “I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than scalar or special. I see this as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts”. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 178; Angelo Torre, *Production of Locality in the Early Modern and Modern Age: Places* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

¹⁶ Pietro Costa, *Iurisdicchio. Semantica del potere politico nella pubblicistica medievale (1100-1433)*. (Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 2002), Chapter III; Hespanha, *La gracia del derecho*, 66; Carlos Garriga, “Orden jurídico y poder político en el Antiguo Régimen.,” *Revista de Historia Internacional* 16 (2004): 30; John B. Owens, “By My Absolute Royal Authority”: *Justice and the Castilian Commonwealth at the Beginning of the First Global Age*, Changing Perspectives on Early Modern Europe (Rochester (N.Y.): University of Rochester Press, 2005), 1; Bartolomé Clavero, “Justicia y gobierno. Economía y gracia.,” in *Real Chancillería de Granada: V Centenario 1505-2005*. (Granada: Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura, 2006), 122, 125; Jesús Vallejo, “Acerca del fruto del árbol de los jueces. Escenarios de la justicia en la cultura del *Ius Commune*,” *Anuario de La Facultad de Derecho de La Universidad de Madrid* 2 (1998): 29-46; Wim Blockmans, André Holenstein, and Jon Mathieu, eds., *Empowering Interactions: Political Cultures and the Emergence of the State in Europe, 1300-1900* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 25-28.



Map 1. Southeast Charcas frontier circa 1590. Map done by the author using Google Earth.

relatively abundant records, compared with other frontier towns, over its foundation and the early years of its existence (see [map 1](#) below).

A Case Study: San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya

Following months of ocean travel, and even a mutiny, Juan Ladrón de Leyba (1553–1613) arrived in Chile in 1576 as captain part of a “socorro” (backup expedition) organised by Chile’s governor Rodrigo de Quiroga and the *Consejo de Indias*, the royal body responsible for the Indies, to bring reinforcements for the war on the *Araucanians*.¹⁷ Ladrón de Leyba is described on the list of expedition members as Toledo-born, aged twenty-two, *moreno* (dark-haired), of average height and with a scar across his head.¹⁸ The young soldier met his future partner and mentor, the Mercedarian friar Antonio de Escobar, in Chile. The area was classed as a war frontier described by the Spanish as the “Flanders of the Indies”.¹⁹ It is likely that when news broke there over the resumed prosperity of Potosí due to the introduction of the amalgamation of silver in the final years of the 1570s, both Ladrón de Leyba and Escobar started planning the establishment of a

¹⁷ Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Patronato 136, Rollo 4, Número 1, Ynformacion fecha de oficio en la Real Audiencia de La Plata de los servicios del capitán Juan Ladrón de Leyba corregidor de la frontera de Pilaya, 1596 available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/124028>; Diego Rosales, *Historia General de El Reyno de Chile. Flandes Indiano.*, vol. II (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1878), 198.

¹⁸ AGI, Patronato, 190, Rollo 12, Gente que reclutó el capitán Juan de Losada, socorro de Chile, available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/125444>.

¹⁹ AGI, Patronato 190, Rollo 12. Gente que reclutó el capitán Juan de Losada, socorro de Chile. Father Escobar arrived in Chile as part of the entourage of viceroy Cañete and Chile governor García Hurtado de Mendoza in 1557; Fray Policarpo Gazulla, *Los primeros mercedarios en Chile. 1535-1600*. (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta La Ilustración, 1918), 160, 261, 460.

town in the east of Charcas to reap the benefits of abundant and fertile land for cultivation or cattle rearing and timber in that area.²⁰

Due to their role in the rescue of captives across the Spanish Empire, Mercedarians were always involved with agents who were active in frontiers and the connection between Escobar and Ladrón de Leyba, apart from personal reasons, reflects this very well.²¹ The role of these members of religious orders as brokers between different actors played a significant part in the construction of frontiers. These priests were supposed to bring indigenous peoples into the fold of Christianity, teaching them a whole range of civic values that would eventually turn them into vassals of the Spanish king and members of the Catholic community. They also had to “watch” other groups such as mestizos, blacks, and the Portuguese and others classed as foreigners, as there were always fears about their “loyalty” and “Christian credentials”. However, religious orders also had to prevent the Spanish from slowly “turning native” in such remote environments, gradually shifting loyalties and, moving away from Christianity. The partnership between Escobar and Ladrón de Leyba also took place at a time when the Jesuits were only timidly rebuilding their presence in Perú, after a period of tension with Viceroy Francisco Álvarez de Toledo (1569–1581).²² It also happened during a period of reform of the Mercedarian order whose members had been associated with a lack of discipline and siding with the rebels during the Civil Wars (1538–1555) in Perú.²³

Escobar left central Chile first, briefly settling in Atacama, under the protection of corregidor Juan Velázquez Altamirano. The friar’s determination to stop men from travelling to Chile and fighting there had created enemies in his old home. They wrote to the authorities asking, “for the love of God ... someone removes this priest from here”.²⁴ His appointment as a priest in San Lucas de Payacollo, an Indian town settled in 1578 by Viceroy Toledo that was home to *Quillaca*, *Charca*, *Asanaque* and *Visisa* natives in the southeast frontier of Charcas, brought relief to the authorities in Chile and gave the priest the opportunity to start preparing the ground for the arrival of his partner Ladrón de Leyba in Charcas in 1584.²⁵

What was the situation that Escobar found upon his arrival in Charcas? Toledo had been succeeded by Don Martín Enriquez (1581–1583) who passed away around two

²⁰ Escobar travelled to Charcas in company of his *yanacunas* or Indian servants from Chile, who he used to call “my guys from Chile” with affection. On Potosí’s recovery see: Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, 1573–1700: Compulsory Indian Labor in the Andes* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985), Chapter 4 and Kris Lane, *Potosí: The Silver City That Changed the World*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), Chapter 3.

²¹ James Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

²² Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, *El pregonero de Dios: Diego Martínez, SJ, misionero jesuita del Perú colonial (1543–1626)*, (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, 2010).

²³ Bruce Taylor, *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Maret Nielander, “Expansion und Aktivitäten des Mercedarier-Ordens im Andenraum des 16. Jahrhunderts” (PhD Dissertation, Heidelberg, Heidelberg University, 2013), Chapter 3.

²⁴ Letter by encomendero Fernando de Aguirre to the viceroy of Perú, 3 February 1583, in José Toribio Medina, *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Chile*, vol. II, Segunda Serie (Santiago de Chile: Fondo Histórico y Bibliográfico de José Toribio Medina, 1957), 152; Paulina Numhauser, “San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya: la Compañía de Jesús, la inquisición y el pobre mercedario Escobar,” in *Escrituras silenciadas. Poder y violencia en la Península Ibérica y América*. (Madrid: UAH, 2015), 204; Francesco Leonardo Lisi, *El tercer concilio limense y la aculturación de los indígenas sudamericanos: estudio crítico con edición, traducción y comentario de las actas del concilio provincial celebrado en Lima entre 1582 y 1583*, (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1990), 41.

²⁵ Ana María Presta, “Hacienda y comunidad. Un estudio en la provincia de Pilaya y Paspaya. Siglos XVI–XVIII,” in *Espacio, etnias, frontera. Atenuaciones políticas en el sur del Tawantinsuyu. Siglos XV–XVIII* (Sucre: Ediciones Asur, 1995), 79–96; Ann Zulawski, *They Eat from Their Labor: Work and Social Change in Colonial Bolivia*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), Chapter 7; Thomas A. Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History among an Andean People* (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 239.

years in his post as Perú's viceroy, leaving the Real Audiencia de Charcas, fully in charge of the district. The Real Audiencia took this opportunity to expand its scope of political action assuming military functions normally attributed to viceroys. In the southeast frontier, the 1574 punitive expedition by Toledo against the Chiriguanaes had had little impact on their regular raids that had become more intense. It did, however, result in the foundation of San Bernardo de la Frontera de Tarija (1574) and Santiago de la Frontera de Tomina (1575). As another friar, Reginaldo de Lizárraga, remembered two decades later, the expansion of silver production in Potosí was "crowding these valleys" and the new towns were a testimony to this.²⁶ Ladrón de Leyba himself wrote decades after about the integration of the southeast frontier with Potosí stressing the presence of "a large number of farms of all sorts of livestock where meat can be obtained and the pastures of that frontier area nurture the largest number of camelids that bring ore from Cerro Rico in Potosí to the lowlands. And from that frontier timber and coal are extracted to feed the smelters and the farms in that frontier provide maize, corn, wine, honey and other supplies, including fish, in large amounts. For this reason the whole region is priceless".²⁷

Despite Ladrón de Leyba's admiring words, farms faced serious labour shortages because of a lack of natives prepared to be put to work under encomienda grants in the area. The alternatives were the exchange of captive natives seized by the Chiriguanaes, and the use of indigenous peoples who, having fled the mining work shifts in Potosí, had taken shelter in the remote frontier.²⁸ With vacant lands that could not be cultivated because of the incursions of Chiriguanaes, and an abundance of captives and fugitives, the frontier was perceived as an area that, although attractive, was only marginally overseen by the authorities, who were not able to police it properly. In terms of the political culture at the time, it was a space ready to be equipped with institutions and relations and to be transformed into a territory of the Spanish Empire. From this perspective, the foundation of towns would offer a unique opportunity to those with the political and financial support to do so, as it had happened with San Bernardo de la Frontera de Tarija and Santiago de la Frontera de Tomina. In addition to the status that town foundation could provide, this was also perceived as a political and spiritual mission based on ideals of service and loyalty to a Catholic monarch that entailed carrying that royal presence and his religion to every corner of the globe.²⁹

In this global polity, where multiple and coexisting layers of interests were the norm, this was reflected in a plurality of laws and authorities. Town foundation was a unique opportunity for the monarchy to aggregate new territories, delegating jurisdiction on them. The Real Audiencia also benefitted, being able to establish patronage ties with the new political communities organised around these urban spaces. It gave the leaders of these communities the possibility of social promotion, gaining access to land and resources, earning prestige for themselves and for their extended political clients and relatives. In San Juan's case, it would give the indigenous communities of San Lucas de Payacollo and their chiefs the option to access more cash to pay royal tribute, a new market for their products, more security against any Chiriguana raid, and an extra workforce for their own fields. Finally, although the Chiriguanaes lost space, they would also gain a market for their captive natives and access to sumptuous items, as well as the option to

²⁶ Reginaldo de Lizárraga, *Descripción colonial*, Libro Segundo (Buenos Aires: Librería de la Facultad, [1605] 1916), 274.

²⁷ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Henceforth BNF), MS Espagnol 175, Letter by Captain Juan Ladrón de Leyba, No date, possibly early seventeenth century. 90r.

²⁸ Revilla Orías, *Entangled Coercion*; Oliveto, "Piezas, presos".

²⁹ Domingo Centenero de Arce, "¿Una monarquía de lazos débiles? Veteranos, militares, y administradores 1580-1621" (PhD Dissertation, Florence, European University Institute, 2009), 183, 251.

perform more raids and seize property and captives from a Spanish town if things did not work out well. Town foundations went hand in hand with the creation of jurisdictions and were the result of collective processes, aggregating new geographies and their peoples, in this case the Chiriguanaes and other natives beyond the frontier, to the immense global mercantile space of the Catholic monarchy.

Early in the 1580s, and after the Toledo's expedition's defeat, the regular raids of the Chiriguanaes on farms and travellers became more prominent and the victims were now of higher prestige in Charcas.³⁰ Faced with this situation, the Real Audiencia began preparations for a large-scale campaign over three separate fronts which were accelerated after the destruction of the town founded by Captain Miguel Martín early in 1584, at the time of the arrival of Ladrón de Leyba to Charcas.³¹ As part of the process to organise a punitive campaign, the corregidor de Indios (royal official responsible for the protection and collection of tribute from the Indian towns in the frontier), Francisco de Lazarte y Molina, interviewed the native chiefs who shared the town of San Lucas -Don Alonso Acama, Don Juan Tapalco, Don Alonso Chuquivilca of the Visisa Indians, Don Martín Chico of the town of Chaquí; and Don Francisco Guarache and his son Don Diego Copatete of the town of San Lucas -and their encomienda holders- Cristóbal Barba y Alvarado, Antonio Pantoja de Chaves, and Francisco Zarate de Ondegardo- late in 1583 seeking a solution to the regular Chiriguana attacks.³² Until then, with support from their *encomenderos*, these chiefs had been tasked with overseeing that section of the south-east Charcas frontier, as their ancestors had done under Tahuantinsuyu.³³ The indigenous leaders insisted that their town and the property of their communities, including a cattle farm called Pototaca where they had between five thousand and six thousand animals, needed protection and all sides agreed that the best way to do it was through the establishment of a Spanish town; something that the Real Audiencia had suggested already and that would require time. As a first step, and due to the urgency of the events, following the recommendation of Father Escobar and the native chiefs of San Lucas, Ladrón de Leyba was appointed *caudillo* (military leader) in the area, with jurisdictional faculties, including powers to seize and return fugitive Indians to their towns or settle them in San Lucas. Leyba's appointment in March 1584 was a key moment for the project to establish a new frontier town. It would provide immediate security and workforce for the area's farms.³⁴

Upon his arrival in San Lucas, Ladrón de Leyba and Father Escobar began preparing the ground for the future town, strengthening their ties with the native chiefs of San Lucas immediately. They were trying to create a support network to build their own authority. To clear any future jurisdictional problems, Ladrón de Leyba also contacted Luis de Fuentes y Vargas, Corregidor of San Bernardo de la Frontera de Tarija, who had the area of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya in his district, even when the distance between

³⁰ The Mercedarian friar Cristóbal de Albarrán and doña María de Angulo, widow of Captain Ñuflo de Chaves were victims of the attacks. Due to their notoriety, the Real Audiencia decided to step up its plans.

³¹ Graña Taborelli, "Speaking the Language of Friendship".

³² AGI, Patronato, 235, R 9. Autos y diligencias hechas por la Audiencia de La Plata, sobre los daños, muertes y robos que los indios chiriguanaes cometían en aquellas fronteras, y guerra que contra ellos se ha pregonado. Contienen estos autos las capitulaciones y asiento que se tomó con el capitán Miguel Martínez, sobre la población de la villa de San Miguel de la Laguna y lo que en ella sucedió, 1583, available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/126375>.

³³ This was carried out by Quillaca native chief in San Lucas don Francisco Visalla during the administration of viceroy Toledo. As a reward from Toledo, Visalla received land as a gift. AGI, Charcas 57, Información de méritos y servicios de don Diego Copatete Guarache, 1622.

³⁴ AGI, Patronato 136, Rollo 4, Número 1. Ynformacion fecha de oficio en la Real Audiencia de La Plata de los servicios del capitán Juan Ladrón de Leyba corregidor de la frontera de Pilaya, 1596.

his town and these valleys was enormous. Fuentes y Vargas agreed to relinquish his rights and authority over San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya, whilst still overseeing San Lucas, insisting that his wages as a corregidor did not include the area, which he still had to oversee.³⁵ This was a partnership that reinforced both frontier captains who could now defend two sections of the frontier, helping each other, without having to resort to the Real Audiencia. Through these ties the future of San Juan was built from within the same frontier.

With an idea of the actual jurisdiction of the future town, the next step was to enlist future settlers and partners. Escobar probably had a long list of contacts and brought together Ladrón de Leyba with his future lieutenant in San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya, Andres Sánchez Serrano, someone who would also contribute funds and men to the operation.³⁶ With these supports, the future Spanish town began to take shape. This was still a project that had to be discussed with the Real Audiencia and had to be confirmed through *capitulaciones* and *asientos*, (legal and political contracts). Jurisdiction had to be negotiated and agreed both on the ground and in court.

The discussions with the Real Audiencia took place simultaneously in the months after Ladrón de Leyba's arrival in San Lucas. They had two sticking points, both concerning the men that would be used to settle the new town. On the one hand, the number of people that Ladrón de Leyba was going to take to the new town was an issue. The Real Audiencia was alarmed by the suggestion that he would only travel with twenty men. Ladrón de Leyba said that they would go with "their mature children, many were also married and would take their servants", suggesting that the final figure would be larger, adding that he would feed them until they could collect their first harvest.³⁷ This generous commitment would reduce any chance for the men to abandon the project which largely depended on the produce of the land. The other sticking point was about the indigenous labour that San Lucas de Payacollo could provide. Ladrón de Leyba asked for 120 natives. The Real Audiencia suggested forty, raising concerns over the impact that a larger number could have over the Indian town. This significant gap suggests that both sides were tacitly agreeing that captive natives exchanged with the Chiriguanaes would make up the difference.

Finally, the discussions focused on fiscal, defence and jurisdictional matters. Ladrón de Leyba secured an exemption of the half percent tax on grain sales in Potosí by farms from the new town. This would make such farms and their activities more profitable. The captain had to accept less gunpowder than the volume he had requested due to concerns by the Real Audiencia that any excess gunpowder might be handed to the Chiriguanaes, as had happened in the past. Ladrón de Leyba also agreed to build a fort in the new town and secured the title of perpetual alderman of the fort. Ladrón de Leyba was finally named captain for the rest of his life. However, he was only allowed to bear the title of

³⁵ At that point it is possible that Fuentes y Vargas was after a smaller jurisdiction because of the problems that he had with the cabildo of San Bernardo de la Frontera. He had gone through two residencia or end of term assessment trials and had been suspended twice. Letter by viceroy Conde del Villar to the King, Callao, 23 December 1586, in Roberto Levillier, *Gobernantes del Perú. Cartas y papeles. Siglo XVI. El Virrey Conde de Villar. 1584-1587*, vol. 10 (Madrid: Imprenta de Juan Pueyo, 1925), 226.

³⁶ AGI, Patronato 134, Rollo 9. Información de los méritos y servicios de Andrés Sánchez Serrano, hechos en la conquista de Perú, pacificación de Chile, y población de la villa de Valverde en el valle de Ica, 1592, available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/124005>. Sánchez Serrano arrived in Chile in the same fleet that brought Escobar in 1557. He was married to doña Francisca Dávila, a member of a household of mine owners in Potosí. Ladrón de Leyba and Sánchez Serrano were both from Castile which probably strengthened their bond.

³⁷ AGI, Patronato 136, Rollo 4, Número 1. Ynformacion fecha de oficio en la Real Audiencia de La Plata de los servicios del capitán Juan Ladrón de Leyba corregidor de la frontera de Pilaya, 1596, 11v-12v.

corregidor of whatever “he would populate” for the length of time that the monarch would decide, meaning that eventually he would have to seek the ultimate royal endorsement for this post. With this formula, on the one hand, the Real Audiencia upheld the monarch’s right to bestow such posts on whoever had the merits to hold them –leaving, on the other hand, the door open to the foundation of more towns by Ladrón de Leyba. Ultimately, the fate of the town would depend on the commitments reached with the Real Audiencia and those negotiated with Escobar, Sánchez Serrano, Fuentes y Vargas and the native chiefs of San Lucas. Without their support, and that of the Chiriguanaes who could otherwise destroy the town, San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya would quickly lose its population. The final outcome of this process was the signing of the *capitulación* and *asiento* of the new town by Ladrón de Leyba on 17 July 1584. A new town was about to be born.³⁸

The town was established on the day of Saint Helladius or Eladio of Toledo, Ladrón de Leyba’s hometown in Spain, on 18 February 1585, seven months after the *capitulación* and *asiento*. Helladius served Visigoth kings in the sixth century, becoming an example of royal service and abnegation, virtues that Ladrón de Leyba and the future town’s residents probably wanted to be seen as having. San Juan was built upon the settlement of Tincoyo, possibly on land donated by the Andean chiefs of San Lucas. Although normally, the first act of possession of any town was the erection of the *rollo de justicia* (pillory), in San Juan’s case this had to wait until a notary, Hernando Ramos, was appointed to take notes of the process. After his appointment, Ladrón de Leyba was able to take “natural, real and physical” possession of the settlement, possibly surrounded by Escobar, Sánchez Serrano and indigenous chiefs, as witnesses to an event that took years in the making, confirming its collective character.

Building Political Density in the Frontier, “Localising” the Monarchy, Creating “Locality”

San Juan de la Villa y Frontera de Paspaya’s foundation was not the end of the story, but its beginning. It was part of a process to territorialise that geography, building political density through institutions and social networks in that frontier, adapting or “localising” the monarchy and its offices and institutions, creating “locality” or a unique local community. The main objective was to keep the land populated. In a political culture based on patronage and favours, this was only achievable through the distribution of rewards, allocating to each group and person involved, what they were entitled to, based on their merits and prestige. The most precious grants were indigenous labour and land and the foundational act which triggered the distribution of both confirmed in that hierarchical society who were the givers and who were the takers of such favours, making the differences between both the more evident.³⁹

The continuity of San Juan depended on the provision and management of lands and indigenous workforce. The arrival of new residents, many of them soldiers, acted frequently as extra pressure on the limited resources of such towns. One of the most significant challenges came from the decline of indigenous populations. San Juan had been

³⁸ AGI, Patronato 136, Rollo 4, Número 1, Ynformacion fecha de oficio en la Real Audiencia de La Plata de los servicios del capitán Juan Ladrón de Leyba corregidor de la frontera de Pilaya, 1596.

³⁹ Unfortunately, the books of the town’s cabildo remain lost. There are some fragments corresponding to the period between 7 August 1605 and 27 March 1610 in a report of merits and services of Captain José de Oviedo. AGI, Charcas, 89, N 14, Informaciones de oficio y parte: José de Oviedo, sargento mayor de las fronteras de Paspaya y Pilaya, alcalde de la Santa Hermandad en ellas. Traslado de una información empezada en 1624 que sigue en 1625 y parecer de la Audiencia en 1625, 12r-15v, available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/341053>.

allocated forty Indians from San Lucas. With such limitations, the only way forward to secure workforce was to resort to the Chiriguanaes. Although frequently associated with the destruction of Spanish towns, they were key to their survival, providing captives that they regularly took from among other indigenous peoples in the lowlands, and sometimes becoming captive workforce themselves because of Spanish raids against their own settlements. These raids also secured Spanish soldiers merits they could use to petition for grants. With their interactions with frontier towns, the Chiriguanaes, voluntarily or not, supported the territorialisation and political construction of that geography, with unique characteristics. They did it by either being “friendly” or “bellicose” Indians; by enabling patronage among the Spanish through the distribution of captive natives or by enabling the accumulation of merits through their fights with the Spanish. They therefore occupied a central role in the political construction of these frontier spaces.

The Andean town of San Lucas and its chiefs and residents also enabled this process by contributing with land and workforce. In exchange, they received Indians who had taken shelter in the frontier escaping from the Potosí mining work, and protection against raids by the Chiriguanaes. Their chiefs were able to police their own peoples and those who were added to their community. The religious orders also secured a workforce to settle and evangelise indigenous populations, acting as brokers among royal authorities, the cabildo, the Real Audiencia, Andean chiefs and even the Chiriguanaes. Finally, Ladrón de Leyba and the town’s cabildo were at the centre of the town as the recipients of royal jurisdiction and administrators of grants. Each of these actors had their own rights and jurisdictions over the frontier and together they were supposed to create a cacophony of the “voice of the king” in an area where his presence was perceived as weak.

As it was mentioned above, depopulation was a constant risk. In its first years of history, San Juan faced two challenges. Early in the 1580s there was a wave of epidemics that led to a decline of indigenous population in the Andes.⁴⁰ A second challenge came from the discovery of silver in Colquechaca and Aullagas, in the Andes, which triggered an exodus.⁴¹ Years after the event, a priest remembered this time “It was such great news about Aullagas of the wealth that existed there that all of us, and I was the first one to feel like it, were dying to flock to the area, because of the situation here due to a lack of Indians”.⁴² With few residents, but more importantly, without Indians, San Juan was struggling. Faced with these challenges, Ladrón de Leyba decided to reconstruct his political leadership and in the context of the political culture of the time this meant strengthening his capacity to distribute grants, securing a stable indigenous workforce and a significant stock of lands. Ladrón de Leyba realised that there had to be some changes and with support from the Real Audiencia, the chiefs of San Lucas and their encomienda holders and corregidor de Indios, he decided to untie himself from Escobar and the Mercedarians, replacing them with a religious order that had become more prevalent in Charcas since the departure

⁴⁰ Noble David Cook, “Epidemias y dinámica demográfica,” in *El primer contacto y la formación de nuevas sociedades*, vol. II (Madrid: UNESCO, Editorial Trotta, 2007), 311; Peter Bakewell, *Mineros de la montaña roja: el trabajo de los indios en Potosí, 1545-1650*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989), 117.

⁴¹ Letter by Licenciado Lopidana to the King, La Plata 19 February 1586, in Roberto Levillier, *La Audiencia de Charcas. Correspondencia entre presidentes y oidores. 1580-1589*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Imprenta de Juan Pueyo, 1922), 244; Letter by Perú’s viceroy Conde del Villar to the King, Callao, 24 December 1586, in Levillier, *Gobernantes del Perú*. vol. 10, 237.

⁴² Archivo Histórico Nacional (henceforth AHN), Madrid, Inquisición, Proceso criminal contra el padre Jerónimo Ruíz del Portillo, 1646, 41r, available on PARES: <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/1312560?nm>.

of Viceroy Toledo: the Jesuits.⁴³ This change triggered a realignment of the local political forces and alliances, also with substantial changes, in San Juan.

The Jesuits were able to rebuild their relations with the authorities in Perú after Toledo's return to Spain and under Viceroy Enriquez. They were more committed to evangelisation and a presence in the frontier. This had been policy decided by the *Junta Magna* in 1568 that already sought to replace the Mercedarians with the Jesuits.⁴⁴ After Enriquez's death in 1583, the Real Audiencia was responsible to nurture the relations with the Jesuits. The Jesuit college of Potosí, for the children of Andean chiefs, reopened. The chiefs of San Lucas and the Jesuits agreed to a donation of land in Copavilque, that would be named Jesús de Trigopampa, in San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya's area. This process also involved Ladrón de Leyba, the Real Audiencia and the corregidor Francisco Lazarte y Molina, establishing the Jesuits in the frontier district.⁴⁵ This coincided with the arrival of these fathers in Tucumán and Santa Cruz de la Sierra between 1585 and 1591.⁴⁶ Their presence on the east of Charcas would help with the settlement of captives and fugitive Indians, as well as contribute to the region's agricultural prosperity due to their technical knowledge. All sides would benefit from this deal, apart from Escobar and the Mercedarians.

The shortage of lands was also an issue in frontier towns. Not all land was arable and sometimes land was unreachable or impossible to work because of labour scarcity. Many lands laid empty. At times, following the foundation of a town, residents would simply leave or even sell their land. San Juan faced a similar situation. In effect, Sánchez Serrano and others were only temporary residents. Without sufficient land, the power of Ladrón de Leyba was diminishing and the vitality of his patronage networks weakening. San Juan's founder contacted Juan Ortíz de Zárate, someone who had been close to Viceroy Toledo and who was appointed by Viceroy Fernando de Torres y Portugal, count of Villar (1585-1589) as his lieutenant in Potosí, to arrange a provision that gave all absent residents thirty days to return to San Juan or risk the loss of their properties.⁴⁷ Lands were awarded as grants and could be recovered if the connection that had made possible such grant had vanished because the recipients were not living under the jurisdiction of the town permanently. The political connection between some of them and

⁴³ A legal case by the Inquisition against Escobar reflects this displacement (AHN, Inquisición, Proceso criminal contra el padre Jerónimo Ruíz del Portillo, 1646, Numhauser, "San Juan de La Frontera de Paspaya"). In the personal letters of Escobar included, the priest expressed his resentment towards Ladrón de Leyba calling him "a man who from nobody I turned into someone" (AHN, Inquisición, Proceso criminal contra el padre Jerónimo Ruíz del Portillo, 1646, f. 37r). This transition led to other changes in Paspaya. Sánchez Serrano, for instance, left or was made to leave the town. It could be suggested that the relation between this other character and Ladrón de Leyba did not end up well as the captain does not appear as a witness to Sánchez Serrano's report of merits and services. (AGI, Patronato 134, Rollo 9, Información de los méritos y servicios de Andrés Sánchez Serrano, hechos en la conquista de Perú, pacificación de Chile, y población de la villa de Valverde en el valle de Ica, 1592). Another of the town's residents, Pedro Martínez de Ajarista (who appears on documents as Axarista or Tajarista) and who was Basque and mine owner in Potosí, also left the frontier area at the same time. Escobar wrote that he was forced out of the area by the Jesuits and that the lands of Jesús de Trigopampa belonged to Martínez de Ajarista. Escobar found little support among his superiors. This might be evidence of the pressure they were under to show a religious order that was prepared to make changes to leave behind the labels of "unruly" and "chaotic".

⁴⁴ Lisi, *El tercer concilio limense*, 54.

⁴⁵ Visisa and Charcas chiefs appear in the paperwork of this donation. The absence of the Quillaca might be because they were involved in litigation over the post of chief of San Lucas due to the passing of their head chief don Juan Colque Guarache in 1584-1585 ABNB, Expedientes Coloniales, 5, Pleito sobre el cacicazgo de San Lucas de Payacollo, 1588; Antonio de Egaña, *Monumenta Peruana. (1576-1580)*, vol. II (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1958), 116-150.

⁴⁶ Coello de la Rosa, *El pregonero de Dios*, 135.

⁴⁷ ABNB, Cabildo Secular de Potosí, Correspondencia para la Audiencia (CPLA) 5, Provision by the Corregidor of Potosí, Juan Ortiz de Zárate, asking all residents to return to Paspaya, Potosí, 20 April 1587, 84r-84v.

Ladrón de Leyba had been dissolved.⁴⁸ This provision represented a legal weapon to negotiate the presence, or absence, of these residents and increase the stock of lands available for future grants. With the Jesuits now committed to San Juan and more land for grants and favours, Ladrón de Leyba had managed to rebuild his leadership as head of San Juan. This happened at a difficult time, however.

Late in 1587, the town was besieged by Chiriguanaes. It had to receive support from San Bernardo de la Frontera and there were casualties on both sides.⁴⁹ This incident was probably consequence of the exodus that left the town without resources to exchange with these natives. An empty town was of little value for the Chiriguanaes accustomed to send regular delegations for trade or war. The incident was a reminder that without their support, San Juan's existence was compromised. There was another problem: the growing presence of English pirates in Pacific Ocean waters which triggered a change in the priorities of the Spanish Crown, to now focus on the defence of coastal frontiers more than inland ones.⁵⁰ This change of policy created tensions between viceroys and the Real Audiencia in Charcas. Based in Lima, viceroys backed the Crown's policy on strengthening the defence of the Pacific coast. The Real Audiencia argued in favour of frontier towns.⁵¹ Struggling to secure support from outside the area in case that protection was needed, these towns now depended more on their residents and their patronage networks as well as keeping peaceful relations with their Chiriguana neighbours.

In his old age, Ladrón de Leyba tried to secure royal confirmation for his corregidor title and extend its jurisdiction to San Lucas de Payacollo and the farms around that Indian town. His strategy succeeded and he finally received his royally endorsed title from Viceroy García Hurtado de Mendoza, marquis of Cañete (1590-1596) and managed to negotiate with Viceroy Luis de Velasco (1596-1604) for the extension and terms for the transfer of his post in "second life" to a suitable candidate -something that he did after marrying his daughter, Doña Esperanza de Leyba, to Vitores de Alvarado (1576-1628), who inherited the job of corregidor in this unusual manner.⁵² The extension of jurisdiction to San Lucas caused a legal battle with the corregidor of San Bernardo de Tarija at the time, Alvaro de Paz Villalobos, who decided to take matters further and fight for the wealthy Indian town and its surrounding farms claiming that such jurisdictional matters had never been actually settled. Paz de Villalobos took the step to publicise that Ladrón de Leyba was not living with his wife in the frontier, who he had not seen for three decades as she was still living in Spain. Heavily indebted, Ladrón de Leyba appealed to the Real Audiencia, begging to let him stay in his post and in San Juan. Going against laws that enforced cohabitation by spouses, the Real Audiencia stated that Ladrón de Leyba had to stay due to fears of the financial impact that his departure

⁴⁸ Antonio Manuel Hespanha, *A Ordem do mundo e o saber dos juristas: imaginários do antigo direito europeu*. (Lisbon: Independently Published, 2017), 60.

⁴⁹ Archivo Histórico de Potosí (henceforth AHP), Cajas Reales (henceforth CR), 144v-145v; Biblioteca Nacional de España (henceforth BNE), Manuscrito 3,044, 302r-308r; Letter by Licenciado Cepeda to the King, La Plata, 13 January 1588, in Levillier, *La Audiencia de Charcas*. vol. 2, 324.

⁵⁰ Martín del Barco Centenera, *Argentina y conquista del Río de La Plata, con otros acaecimientos de los Reynos del Perú, Tucumán, y Estado del Brasil*. (Lisbon: Pedro Crasbeek, 1602), 210.

⁵¹ AGI, Charcas, 35. Testimonio de lo que ha pasado cerca de los apercebimientos, que se hizieron por el conde del villar virrey del peru con los vezinos de la ciudad de la plata para que viniesen a la de los reyes en las ocasiones de los cossarios a servir a su magestad en lo tocante a la guarda y seguro del reyno como estan obligados por sus feudos y encomienda y de las escussas que han dado para no benir ni pagar la commutacion para paga de los soldados diziendo que tienen orden de su magestad para asistir en aquella ciudad y no salir della; Letter by Licenciados Cepeda and Lopidana to the King, La Plata, 31 December 1586, in Levillier, *La Audiencia de Charcas*. vol 2, 283.

⁵² Francisco López de Caravantes, *Noticia Del Perú*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1987), 159-160; ABBN, EP, 179, Testamento de Vitores de Alvarado Cabelid, Escribanía de Lorenzo de Mecina, 28 de agosto de 1616, 170v.

would have over creditors in Charcas.⁵³ Far from enjoying an idyllic old age, Ladrón de Leyba ended his days plagued with concerns about his legacy.

Conclusions: The Challenges Faced by the Territorialisation of the Southeast Charcas Frontier

The present article suggests some lines of thought for the analysis of the process of town foundation and its place in the transformation of a geography into a territory of the Spanish empire. It marks a shift from previous scholarship that describes such processes as vertically constructed and part of the slow creation of a colonial state and adds to recent works on the southeast of Charcas and frontiers of the Iberian worlds. It also builds on more recent works on the interactions between indigenous peoples and the Spanish and the creation of a “frontier society”. This article characterises the establishment of towns as a collective, negotiated, and complex process with material, social, political and symbolic meanings for those involved. Besides the promises of a better life, political loyalties and their Catholic faith were also reasons to mobilise men, their families, relatives, and servants to move to frontier spaces perceived as lawless.

Once in such spaces, towns depended on land and indigenous workforce provision for their continuity. Both were key in the administration of rewards and grants, and therefore in the functioning of patronage networks. This situation places indigenous agency at the centre. Ladrón de Leyba’s political leadership depended on the interests of residents and soldiers of San Juan, San Lucas and its native chiefs, communities, encomienda holders and their corregidor, the Real Audiencia, religious orders and even the Chiriguanaes. Jurisdictions were negotiated and the documents signed by Ladrón de Leyba reflected such reality. This would slowly create a unique political density in that space, in which the monarchy adopted a local character, which in turn produced a political community in the area with its own characteristics. A unique feature in this space was the fact that its corregidor had jurisdiction over both indigenous and Spanish peoples, something that did not happen in other areas in Charcas, where both roles were separated.⁵⁴ However, corregidores in the frontier only oversaw indigenous peoples who were based in farms. Natives in Indian towns were overseen by corregidores de Indios based outside the frontier. The institutions were therefore adapted to the reality of this space. All these authorities had to find a way to work together, despite their, sometimes, overlapping jurisdictions. Furthermore, in the political culture of the time, different hierarchies and groups were tied together through patronage and personal relations. Without these and the joint work of different institutions, the town would have been depopulated.

In addition to regular challenges, such as raids by the Chiriguanaes, there was a decline in indigenous population, an exodus of Spanish people in search for wealth in new silver mines, the abandonment of lands by residents, and the growing presence of pirates in the Pacific. These events triggered re-evaluations and the accommodation of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya’s authorities. Ladrón de Leyba was able to sail through these challenges changing loyalties and finding new support among the Jesuits, revitalising his

⁵³ ABNB, ALP, CACH, 504, Letter by the Audiencia de Charcas to the viceroy of Perú regarding differences between Álvaro de Paz Villalobos and Juan Ladrón de Leyva, and other affairs, 1 June 1605.

⁵⁴ Ariel J. Morrone, “Poder local, jurisdicción territorial y redes sociales: los Corregidores de Indios en Charcas (1565-1650),” in *Gobernar el Virreinato del Perú, S. XVI-XVII. Praxis político-institucional, redes de poder y usos de la información oficial* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Sínderesis, UBI Ediciones, Ediciones UC Temuco, 2022), 277–304; Adolfo Polo y La Borda, “Los orígenes del Corregidor del Cusco y el establecimiento de la soberanía del Rey. Una perspectiva atlántica,” in *Gobernar el Virreinato del Perú, S. XVI-XVII. Praxis político-jurisdiccional, redes de poder y usos de la información oficial* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Sínderesis, UBI Ediciones, Ediciones UC Temuco, 2022), 305–31.

leadership as the head and founder of the town. This enabled the continuation of San Juan de la Frontera de Paspaya beyond its founder's death early in the seventeenth century.⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ San Juan was almost destroyed due to flooding along the Pilcomayo River in 1610. It had to be rebuilt almost entirely. The information on the incident stresses that it had a church, a fort with two towers, and other seven towers around the town, with a main square and its pillory in its centre. By then, Ladrón de Leyba was focused on his second project for some time: the town of Pilaya. AGI, Charcas, 89, Rollo 14, Informaciones de oficio y parte: José de Oviedo, sargento mayor de las fronteras de Paspaya y Pilaya, alcalde de la Santa Hermandad en ellas. Traslado de una información empezada en 1624 que sigue en 1625 y parecer de la Audiencia en 1625.

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