Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology

The Historical Archaeology of Buenos Aires

A City at the End of the World

Daniel Schávelzon

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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The Historical Archaeology of Buenos Aires

A City at the End of the World

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Foreword

A program designed to examine and integrate the historical and archaeological record of a major city is a monumental challenge, In this book Daniel Schávelzon presents a summary of his efforts to meet that challenge through documentary research and twenty archaeological projects carried out in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, since 1985.

To put the challenge faced by Schávelzon in perspective, the reader should know that historical archaeology in Latin America is a relatively new field, the first South American conference on historical archaeology having been held in Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay, in November 1993. At that conference, I met Schávelzon and a number of his colleagues and found that historical archaeology there is being conducted by those trained in anthropology, classical archaeology, history, architecture, and art history under a variety of theories from the scientific processual to the postprocessual approaches, as is the case in the United States.

At that conference, Schávelzon expressed the need for publication outlets for the work he and his colleagues were undertaking. As a result I edited sixteen volumes of a publication series, *Historical Archaeology in Latin America* (South 1994–1996), through funds provided by the Conference on Historic Site Archaeology, which I founded in 1960. Schávelzon's report on the archaeology and history of Imprenta Coni, Buenos Aires, constituted the first volume of that series (Schávelzon 1994).

Schávelzon is one of the few pioneers in historical archaeology in South America and as such he and his colleagues face many of the same challenges encountered by those North American pioneers in historical archaeology some thirty and more years ago (South 1994). One of these is the fact that most of their colleagues are primarily interested in prehistoric Indian archaeology, not the archaeology of the multicultural, multinational, plural-ethnic situation presented by European settlement. This limits the number of colleagues available for interactive exchange of ideas and data.

There are a few citywide projects in Argentina and a few other South American countries with which Schávelzon can compare his archaeological findings. However, comparable examples require a material culture

taxonomy shared by colleagues using a similar theoretical framework. Without such a shared temporally consistent taxonomy quantitatively analyzed toward shared goals of understanding urban change, intercity-specific studies remain largely idiosyncratic with little predictive value. Sometimes the frontier can be a very lonely place.

Consequently, in this book Shávelzon makes intrasite comparisons using percentages between various artifact groups and some intersite comparisons among his Buenos Aires sites, but comparison of his findings with results in other South American city studies must await the execution and publication of such studies, and, indeed, in many cases the establishment of governmental structures to support historical archaeology.

Another challenge is the fact that the multinational, multicultural, plural-ethnic character of Buenos Aires society has resulted in a similar archaeologically complex material culture record, as demonstrated in this book. On eighteenth-century British colonial sites in North America, for instance, the ceramic picture is far simpler than it is in Buenos Aires, allowing a Mean Ceramic Date Formula to be developed to date groups of British ceramics (or Spanish majolicas on Spanish colonial sites) within a decade of their use on the site (South 1972; 71–116; 1977; 201–274). With the multinational complexity of the eighteenth-century ceramic record in Buenos Aires, such a simple dating mechanism using ceramic types is not yet available.

Ceramic taxonomies are just now being worked out by Schávelzon and his colleagues to allow better temporal and national-origin comparison of ceramic assemblages from sites in various South American countries, the situation faced by historical archaeologists in the 1960s and 1970s on North American British and Spanish colonial sites. The integration of the documentary record with the archaeological record to produce interpretations valid beyond the site-specific level is always a problem.

In this book, Schávelzon depends heavily on the documentary record to unfold the evolutionary development of Buenos Aires, using it as a screen against which the findings from the archaeological sites are projected. A major priority is the examination of the process of change from the sixteenth century represented by few clues to the abundant archaeological record left from the eighteenth and later centuries. The gradual accumulation in the years to come of archaeological data from various parts of Buenos Aires will allow a refinement of knowledge relating to the questions being asked.

Thus far, however, as Schávelzon states in this book, Buenos Aires is a city with a "destiny predetermined by the international economical

and political structures. And this is what the material culture reflects: the systematic decrease in the presence of Indian and *criollo* artifacts, and the permanent increase of goods originated in Europe." Buenos Aires is a multiple and heterogeneous city "with different religions and tongues" and a city that today has a society that "is divided between luxury and misery, among those who have an easy access to massive consumption of material goods and others who survive in the utmost poverty." It is a consumer city "at the end of the world." In this book Schavelzon shares with us his present insights into his city as gained through his pioneering research in Buenos Aires.

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Preface

Buenos Aires is today, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a settlement of over eight million inhabitants, a capital city of a republic (Argentina), and one of the largest cities in the Americas, with a prevailing white population, an important middle class, and no Aborigines or Afro-Argentines. Hard as it may be to believe, way back in time the village had been far from viable, a situation that persisted for almost two centuries. Thus, it was necessary to be founded twice in the same place and several more times elsewhere. The first half century elapsed under conditions of utmost poverty and hardship, and its existence was more than once at stake until the eighteenth century. Any eventual political decision deriving in a change of the port's routine or in the withdrawal of military garrisons financed by the Crown would have swept it away for good. The village had not extended into the hinterland and was poorly exploited until the mideighteenth century. Agriculture had not been a priority and cattle raising was nonexistent as a commercial venture. Since the aboriginal population was not numerous, the labor force was unsufficient to support Europeans; slaves were extremely expensive, and there were neither mining exploitations nor sugar cane plantations. The port was not built as such until the late nineteenth century, and an absolute prohibition for free trading was kept in force until 1776. Moreover, Buenos Aires was standing at the far end of the Atlantic; farther south, there was nothing but the uninhabited immensity of Patagonia.

How was it possible that the village managed to stay alive and survive under such conditions—when many other settlements in similar circumstances plainly disappeared—developing more and more to become what it is today? Buenos Aires's *twin* city, Santa Fe la Vieja (Cayastá), had to be moved in the seventeenth century; Asunción, from which Buenos Aires was founded, is today a secondary city in terms of significance, and such is the case with Córdoba, Salta, or Tucumán. Could Buenos Aires have competed with Potosí or Lima, or even with Arequipa, if that intention had existed? These are questions historians have posed in the past. No doubt the arguments are multiple and often contradictory, and in history there is no such thing as a definite and unique answer.

Archaeology has proposed a reading of the city from an alternate position, different from the more traditional ones of documentary history and art collections; this is based on the point of view of material remains and their contextuality. This book explores the underground world, rich in physical evidence of architecture and the everyday activities of people at different historic moments, working with an unobtainable body of information, should we have turned only to history, museum collections, or even history of art or other cultural expressions. This constitutes a huge volume of several hundred thousand fragments of objects, bones, seeds, or building foundations, which for different reasons have been left aside or forgotten by society. With such pieces of evidence, we have the opportunity to actually observe other aspects of everyday life in the past, different social groups, and from the very earliest days of the city. This reading leads us to try to build an archaeological history of Buenos Aires.

To put it briefly, what we see is a multiethnic, pluricultural, extremely flexible capacity to adapt to frequent changes, one that was able to create mechanisms for survival adequate to ever-changing realities, as was the contraband and intermediary commerce; a history that would put aside primary production to focus on tertiary activities to obtain great profits, accumulate power, and quickly become a center instead of a city at a border of the empire. In this way, other former centers became a border. Would the city have survived without these socioeconomic processes? Would it have existed had it gone on assuming it was a city at the borders of the empire, not purely white and not totally Spanish? These are all important questions to which, in such a short text, I shall try to provide a few basic answers.

* * *

This book has been written by a grandson of immigrants who arrived in Argentina–together with three million Europeans–at the beginning of the twentieth century, as refugees running from religious persecution, racism, hunger, or oppression, and much too often from all of these situations together. My family was comprised of four people coming from the different Russias of the Ural Mountains and Ukraine, from Poland (actually, the Austria-Hungarian Empire), and Lithuania, through France and South Africa, people who were a part of persecuted minorities in their own countries because of their ideas or religions, and who consequently were condemned to poverty, marginality, and social misery. People who came to Argentina at the beginning of the promising twentieth century with other immigrants to fulfill a personal but also a collective project, and who transformed Buenos Aires into the

most European-like of all American cities. Actually, and without being aware of it, these immigrants made the old dream of local ruling classes come true, as they were longing for a city whiter than any other city of whites. But even though these powerful local groups proved to be wrong, because the final result was another kind of multiethnic and pluricultural city, this reality constituted the engine that set the country in motion. In spite of this, and together with another two hundred thousand Argentineans, I was forced to migrate once more, threatened because of my ideas and convictions; after a wait of over ten years, I had the chance to return home, and this time with an even more international family: a wife born in Manhattan from Italian, Spanish, and Basque ancestors, and a Mexican son, to complete the circle of the eternal immigrants.

Maybe no one can fully leave his personal history at the time of making a reading of reality, and maybe this is not something bad in itself. We were born among the soft cottons of progress in the decade of the 1950s, in a generation that switched from reading Jules Verne to watching the first landing of man on the moon. A generation that was desperately trying to forget the birthmark of a hideous war, and that witnessed increasingly amazing technological developments while half of the planet was dying from starvation—an ongoing situation. A generation that saw the fall of the simplest flags of Pans in May 1968, and that also saw the collapse of the Soviet world for the consolidation of the pragmatism of a capitalist system, which, at least in these far lands of ours, acts so brutally. And we ask ourselves: could all of this have been different?

Maybe this book is a part of that quest for explanations that could somehow explain ourselves, the *porteños,* people who live by the port, people from Buenos Aires. The city is not an independent entity with a life of its own; it is and it will always be, ultimately, ourselves. This is what Pablo Neruda says in one of his most famous poems: "We, the ones of that time, are no longer the same."*

* * *

This work is intended to present the results of thirteen years of excavations conducted in Buenos Aires. It is an intercrossing of a number of hypotheses that pertain to urban history and the habits and lifestyle of the upper and the less wealthy social groups, with a special emphasis on the processes of change in architecture and ways of inhabiting.

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*Pablo Neruda, *Antologia,* Poema 20, pp. 46, Editorial Nascimiento, Santiago de Chile, 1957.

Several examples have been gathered that were considered significant, and from them just a small portion of the recovered information is presented. Archaeology of a city, through systematic research that was to be performed within the city, was something that had never been done in South America prior to 1985, when our first projects were initiated, and the results obtained now represent a whole body of knowledge built with no little difficulties in the pursue of an interdisciplinary vision. Similar actions are being taken today in many other countries in the region. Are we witnessing a change in the way of doing archaeology in South America? Maybe the answer is yes. And if this book helps to prop up this new road in the archaeological and historical fields, if it helps to achieve a wider vision of our past, to recover a forgotten part of our cultural heritage and the memory of the city, then, and hopefully, the intentions of the author will be fulfilled.

Acknowledgments

Is it at all possible to list all those people who for so many years have helped, in one way or the other, in the numerous archaeological works carried out in Buenos Aires? I do not think so. This may seem surprising and perhaps not too serious to scholars from the United States or Europe, but the Latin American reality, unfortunately, is different: even though we are almost at the turn of the century, archaeology in Argentina faces a permanent lack of budgets and the nonexistence of publishers able or willing to publish works on the subject—not to mention the difficulty of finding professionals able to undertake new challenges in issues such as urban archaeology or any other form of interdisciplinary scientific activity. In addition, our laboratories and libraries are inadequate and working conditions poor; at the beginning of the twenty-first century, many research centers still lack computers or a simple copier machine. However, and within this framework, more than twenty archaeological projects have been carried out in the city since 1985, including a large number of minor surveys, the creation of an interesting collection of reference ceramics, and the publication of a half-dozen books. All of this was made possible thanks to the permanent and systematic help of many people, together with public and private institutions that provided whatever they had at hand for each fieldwork or laboratory study.

Among the institutions, I have at all times counted on the support of the Instituto de Arte Americano Mario Buschiazzo (FADU-UBA), from which the Centro de Arqueología Urbana was created in 1991 and where I develop my everyday activity. To CONICET, I owe my career as a scientific researcher and the team of collaborators who work side by side with me. Since 1997, the city government of Buenos Aires has created the Area of Urban Archaeology as a part of the program Por la Memoria de Buenos Aires; this has represented first-rate support and has as well promoted a much wider diffusion of our activity. My deepest gratitude to the authorities and friends at these three institutions.

I am indebted to a number of international organizations that have also supported our efforts, in these faraway lands, with their generous fellowships and grants: the John S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (New York), the Center for the Studies in the Visual Arts,

National Gallery of Art (Washington), and Earthwatch, whose volunteers represented an outstanding help in the archaeological excavation of several of the buildings described in this book. My profound gratitude for the sound, constant support and friendship of Stanley South (South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology); my thanks also to Kathleen Deagan (Florida Museum of Natural History) and Charles E. Orser, Jr. (Illinois State University).

In Argentina, there are so many people to whom I am in debt; they are those colleagues who from the disciplines of archaeology, history, cultural heritage, or urban and architectural history have helped me with their collaboration and valuable ideas: Mario Silveira, Mariano Ramos, América Malbrán, Ana María Lorandi, Jorge Ramos, Clara Abal, Carlos Moreno, Sandra Fantuzzi, María Teresa Carrara, Pablo López Coda, Zunilda Quatrin, Antonio Austral, Facundo Gómez Romero, Graciela Mendoza, Marcelo Weissel, Pablo Willemsen, Silvana Di Lorenzo, Matilde Lanza, Graciela Seró Mantero, and Paula Moreno, among so many others that, perhaps, I have failed to remember. I must also point out that none of my fieldwork would have been possible without the help of all the students who collaborated–for free, in most cases–during the excavations and later at the laboratory. And specifically, from the laboratory, I want to thank María del Carmen Magaz, Norma Pérez, and Guillermo Páez, and from city government, María Saenz Quesada, Juan Ruibal, and Liliana Barela.

And last but not least, I want to thank my wife, Alex, for being there for me, and for turning my intricate manuscripts into something readable; my thanks also to Nicolás, who has proved a reliable collaborator, and who also happens to be my son.

The illustrations and pictures included in the book are a part of the archaeological projects carried out by the *Centro de Arqueología Urbana,* with the exception of the aerial photography of downtown Buenos Aires, which has been reproduced with the personal authorization of Florian von der Fecht. The archeofauna illustrations belong to Mario Silveira; several plans are based on drawings by Alberto de Paula; the old photographs and engravings have been reproduced from the archives of the *Centro de Arqueología Urbana,* while the originals belong to the National Historic Museum and the General Archives of the Nation.

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Did It Exist at All?

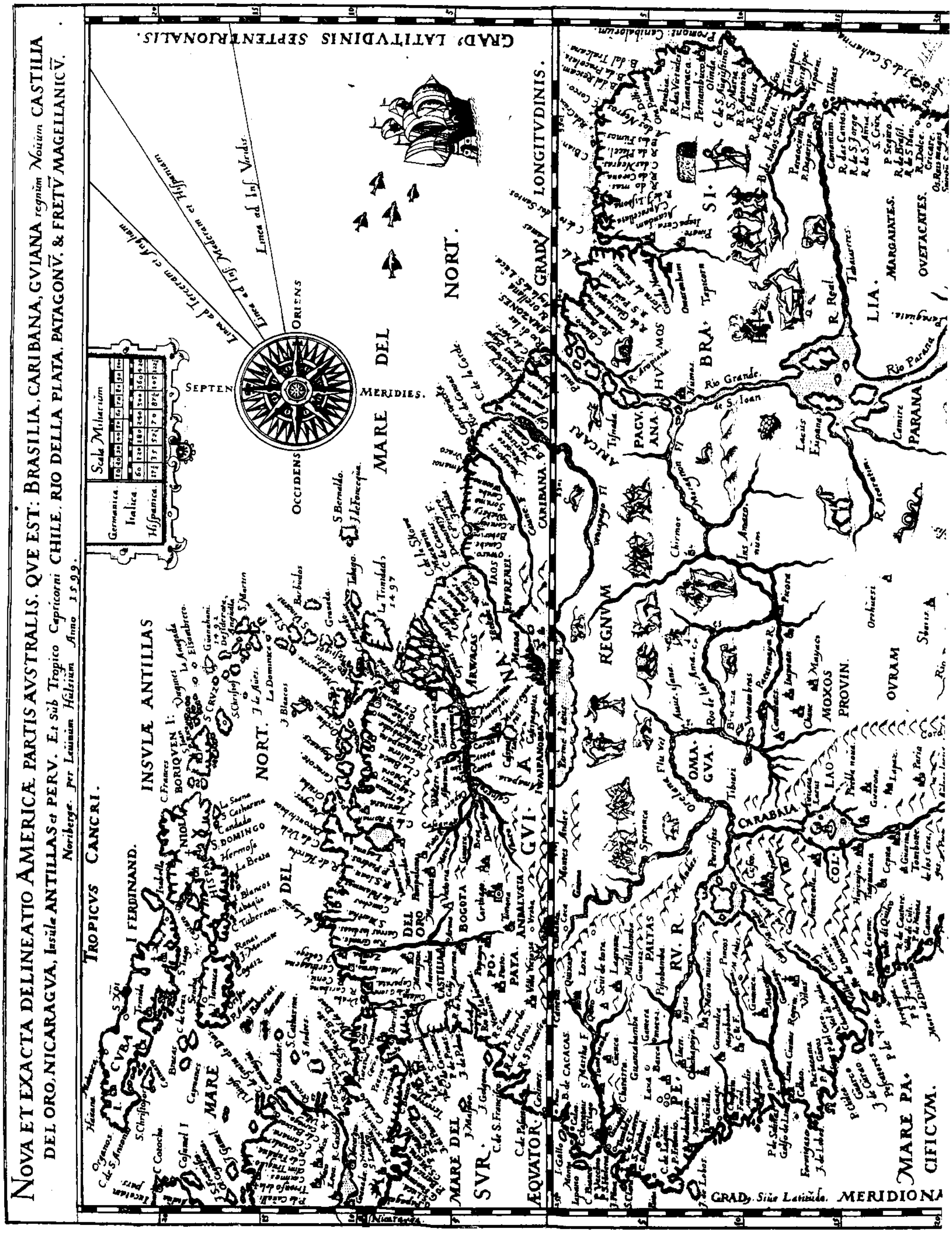
The First Buenos Aires (1536–1541)

THE BEGINNING

In 1535, in Spain, the largest expedition ever organized until then was ready to set sail for the conquest of the southern portion of the Americas. The Adelantado Don Pedro de Mendoza, who was in charge of the operations, had signed a capitulation with the king by which he committed himself to discover and secure for the Crown a huge extension of territory in the New World. His duties were the establishment of different strongholds and the conquest of an unknown land that was believed to be immensely rich. In 1533 important shipments of gold sent by Pizarro from Perú had arrived in Spain, and Europe was astonished at the sight of such wonders; consequently, the Río de la Plata was also expected to provide equally amazing treasures.

Mendoza was to explore the region located exactly south of the Línea de Tordesillas, the frontier separating Portuguese and Spanish possessions, where the Río de la Plata had already been discovered. Not only this was the widest river in the world, at the time also known as Mar Dulce, but it also had other potential virtues: it could eventually become the eastern gateway to the lands from which the Incas obtained their silver. It also represented the possibility of a fast escape for goods stolen from Indians, without having to navigate around the continent to the south, crossing from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, and then sailing again north to Europe (Figure 1). The region had formerly been explored by Manuel Nuño, from Portugal, in 1513, by Fernando de Magalhaes in 1520, and by Sebastián Caboto, from Venice, in 1526, among other travelers. Later, the fortress of Sancti Spiritus was founded in 1527 on one side of the Carcarañá River, but in the course of the following year it had been taken by assault by Aborigines and burnt to ashes.

The Mendoza expedition consisted of nearly two thousand men and women, a great variety of animals, and whatever was necessary in supplies and equipment for such an undertaking. It was a true mission of conquest duly provided for that included a large number of non-Spanish



NOVA ET EXACTA DELINEATIO AMERICÆ PARTIS AVSTRALIS, QVE EST: BRASILIA, CARIBANA, GVIANA *regnum Nouum* CASTILIA DEL ORO, NICARAGVA, *Insulæ* ANTILLAS *et* PERV. *Et sub Tropico Capricorni* CHILE, RIO DELLA PLATA, PATAGONV, & FRETV MAGELLANICV.

Noriberge per Leuinum Hulsium Anno 1599.

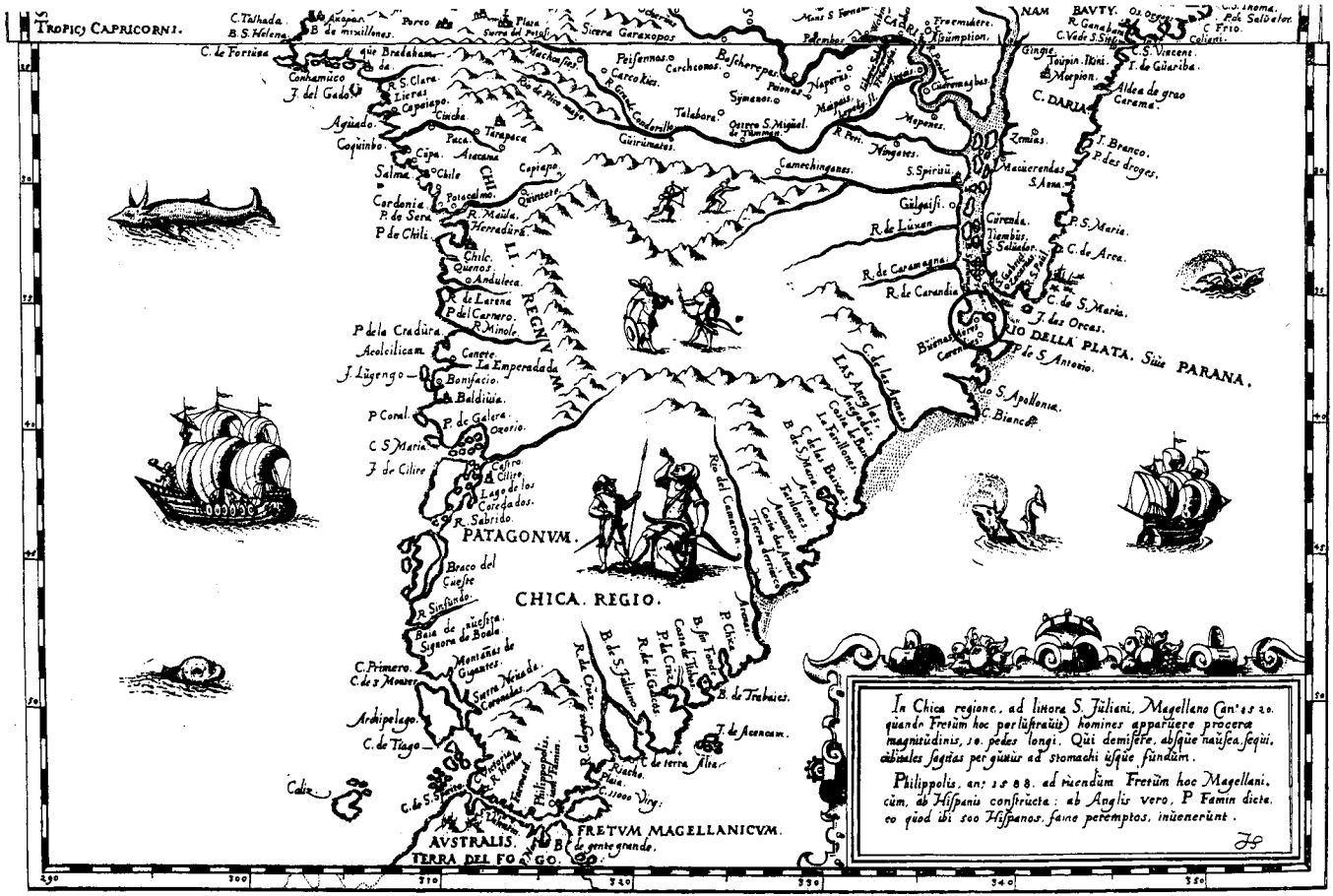


Figure 1. South America, with the location of Buenos Aires in the Río de la Plata and the mouths of the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers; fluvial itinerary that defined the conquest of the territory. Version drawn by Levinus Hulsius for Ulrico Schmidl's first edition of 1599 (Archives of the CAU).

mercenary soldiers. A member of this army, the German Ulrich Schmidl, from Tubingia, wrote the first detailed chronicle of Buenos Aires. Ambrosio Eusebio also joined the party; he was a humble man who sent back to Italy the first notices about the strange new territories where he had seen "un gran fiume comme mare", and where the weather at Christmastime happened to be extremely hot (del Carril 1955).

The entire fleet set sail to America, but during the long journey a number of ships were lost for different reasons. At the time the expedition finally arrived at the Río de la Plata, after following a navigation that was full of problems and internal struggles, only some fifteen hundred souls could come ashore. It was a large group of people, too large for a conquering campaign, considering they would eventually have to move fast in a hostile territory, through unknown regions, permanently adapting to new situations. Once the expedition was at the San Gabriel Island in the Río de la Plata, a group was sent by Mendoza to scout the south shore. One of those men had sailed with Sebástian Caboto years before in the same waters. The group spotted a well-protected place by a slope, near a stream that formed a wide curve at the entrance, which would eventually impede any enemy vessels to approach directly. The place was to be their bridgehead and disembarking area from which the conquest would be initiated.

The territory stipulated by the Crown was extraordinarily extended, as large a surface as all of western Europe. So why did they choose the south shore instead of the north one? This question has been posed time after time, but no satisfactory answer has so far been provided. The north shore was a rocky coast, with clean waters and deep ports; the south end was full of mud and had shallow, dirty waters, Assuming the more modern points of view, which contradict those in traditional historiography (de Gandía 1936; Zavala and de Gandía 1980), maybe Mendoza had no intention of founding a city at all, or maybe what he was after was only a temporary settlement from which he could explore the inland without being forced to cross the large rivers he would have encountered had he chosen the north shore. In fact, at the south he was better protected from enemy vessels and farther from Portuguese potential enemies. All of the decisions made suggest they had more to do with the need of securing a fortified position, a protection against attacks from the river, rather than from the inland. Unfortunately, environmental conditions were not taken into consideration, and soon expeditioners were in very serious trouble.

THINGS WERE NOT THAT EASY

Mendoza headed into the stream, the Riachuelo, anchored his ships, disembarked, and, somewhere close to the shore, set camp. There he made contact with the seminomadic Indians that caught fish in the area, demanding from them to be provided with fish and other food supplies. Help from the Aborigines lasted only a few days, as the Indians refused to go on feeding a group of such proportions. They were not permanently settled there and lacked the solid economic structures natives had in Perú or Mexico. Thus, there were fights and struggles, which resulted in deaths and injuries.

Before long the conquerors found themselves in an almost desperate situation: Mendoza had lost control of the men, he suffered from syphilis, and to make things even worse, he lacked the qualities of a leader. The region apparently was poor and so were the Aborigines. There was no flora or fauna that could feed such a numerous and unproductive group. So, the long journey north was initiated, traveling up the rivers in pursue of the routes of silver, founding temporary settlements here and there, and plundering whatever these Europeans could from the Indians. Men begun to die in large numbers; expeditioners managed to feed only themselves, and food procurement involved tremendous efforts. Going upstream on the Paraná River meant several months of traveling to cover just a few miles. Ships were pulled *a la sirga* from the shore or dragged with ropes, rowing boats, inch-by-inch, in truly suicidal journeys. Of the first expedition that departed in the search for food, half of the men died from starvation. However, in one way or another, the rest of them managed to survive, enduring great hardships, until finally two scouting groups succeeded in finding supplies. The members of one of the expeditions founded another temporary settlement, Buena Esperanza, close to Sancti Spiritus; the same happened with the stronghold of La Candelaria.

In the meantime, the expeditioners improved their living conditions at the *real* of Nuestra Señora de Santa María de Buen Aire, christianed after the virgin of seamen. A cabin was built for Mendoza, as was also a church, made with the timber of a ship, together with a surrounding earthen wall and a few huts. With time, after the last few survivors abandoned the village in 1541, the importance of the settlement was intentionally magnified by two different groups: those who had taken legal action against Mendoza's heirs, since he had died during his trip back to Spain (Comisión Oficial 1941), and

early twentieth-century nationalist historians, willing perhaps to present a more glorious history (de Gandía 1936, 1939; de Vedia and Mitre 1980). The word "port" had always preceded the name of the settlement, thus suggesting that even the expeditioners thought of it as a landing place, not a village.

Prior to Buenos Aires, only a few other settlements had been established: the first one was nothing but a small stronghold at the banks of the San Juan River, presently known as the Uruguay River, with a population of twelve men Sebastián Caboto had stationed there in early 1527; the second one, Sancti Spiritus, had a short life, as it was swept away by natives, who were neither willing to accept expeditioners in their territories nor to comply with their demands for food and gold. One of Mendoza's men, in turn, twice made the attempt to colonize Corpus Christi, but with no success; the settlers finally were forced to leave.

The first Buenos Aires, thus, appears to have been nothing but a temporary settlement, similar to others established only as headquarters or strongholds for large conquering operations. From Schmidl's writings, it becomes apparent that Aborigines were treated with unthinkable cruelty; when expeditioners made the decision to execute the Payaguá chieftains, they sentenced them to be burned to death, and they were slowly roasted, unlike the traditional methods of death by fire used during the Middle Ages. Schmidl does not hesitate to tell how they robbed, plundered, burnt villages to ashes, and took slaves; as to the Spaniards, they killed one another for the smallest offense. The thought of settling down, working the land, and building a city never crossed their minds.

This leads us once again to the old historic controversy about the extension of and the type of settlement the first Buenos Aires was. To some authors, it was a true village with a plaza, streets, churches, and a number of comfortable dwellings that included the residence of the Adelantado. To others, it was just a group of precarious huts made of wood and straw, which were later surrounded by a low earthen wall (Patti 1993).

A second unsolved issue has to do with the precise location of this so-called city. There are a number of contradictory hypotheses and one official position assumed by national history, by which the place where Buenos Aires was founded for the first time is located at the south sector of the upper modern city, by the slope and at the point closest to the Riachuelo, that is to say, where Lezama Park stands to-

day (Figure 2). This is the official location of the first city; but this is also the site where we have carried out exhaustive archaeological excavations, without having recovered one single fragment that could be attributed to the sixteenth century (Schávelzon 1992b).

The history of that first Buenos Aires started to decline when Juan de Ayolas, following instructions emanated from Mendoza, established a stronghold in 1537, at the place where Nuestra Señora de Asunción, today the capital city of Paraguay, used to stand. The settlement was established in an environment adequate for a permanent stay, with friendly Aborigines nearby, sufficient food, an adequate water supply, and a harbor. This settlement can be taken as a sample of what Buenos Aires or any other contemporary site must have been like, but at least until 1541, it was but a huge hut made of wood and straw, surrounded by an earthen perimetrical wall (Lafuente Machaín 1955).

People in Buenos Aires were still starving and mortality was high; nevertheless, only a small group decided to start cultivating the fields. After only two years of severe hardships, one of the men came up with the bright idea of manufacturing fishhooks so that they could fish, while also using the nets they had stolen from the Aborigines by force in the past when demanding food. The group of expeditioners was mainly composed of mercenaries and greedy soldiers, and their intentions were far from doing any handiwork. Their projects and plans then seemed to dissolve: there were no treasures in sight, and the road to the land of silver was nothing but a mirage; they would have to open it by themselves. Moreover, after Mendoza returned to Spain, locals and new authorities begun to struggle for power, debating the idea of moving north to Asunción or staying where they were. The situation came to an abrupt end when Alonso de Cabrera made the final decision to move on and burnt to the ground whatever was still standing in the village. This occurred in 1541 and only a small group of people survived. Upon arriving to their destiny, the old precarious cabins that still stood were torn down and the first *trazado* of the city was drawn up. This could have ended differently, as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca arrived at the abandoned village only a few days later, with orders to populate Buenos Aires once more. He tried to resettle along the banks of the San Juan River of the eastern coast of the Rio de la Plata, but his efforts were unsuccessful and the place was abandoned again.

Figure 2. Present territory of Argentina showing the Spanish process of territorial occupation and the gradual decrease of Indian lands: (A) 1620, (B) 1820, (C) 1880.

Figure 2 (cont.)

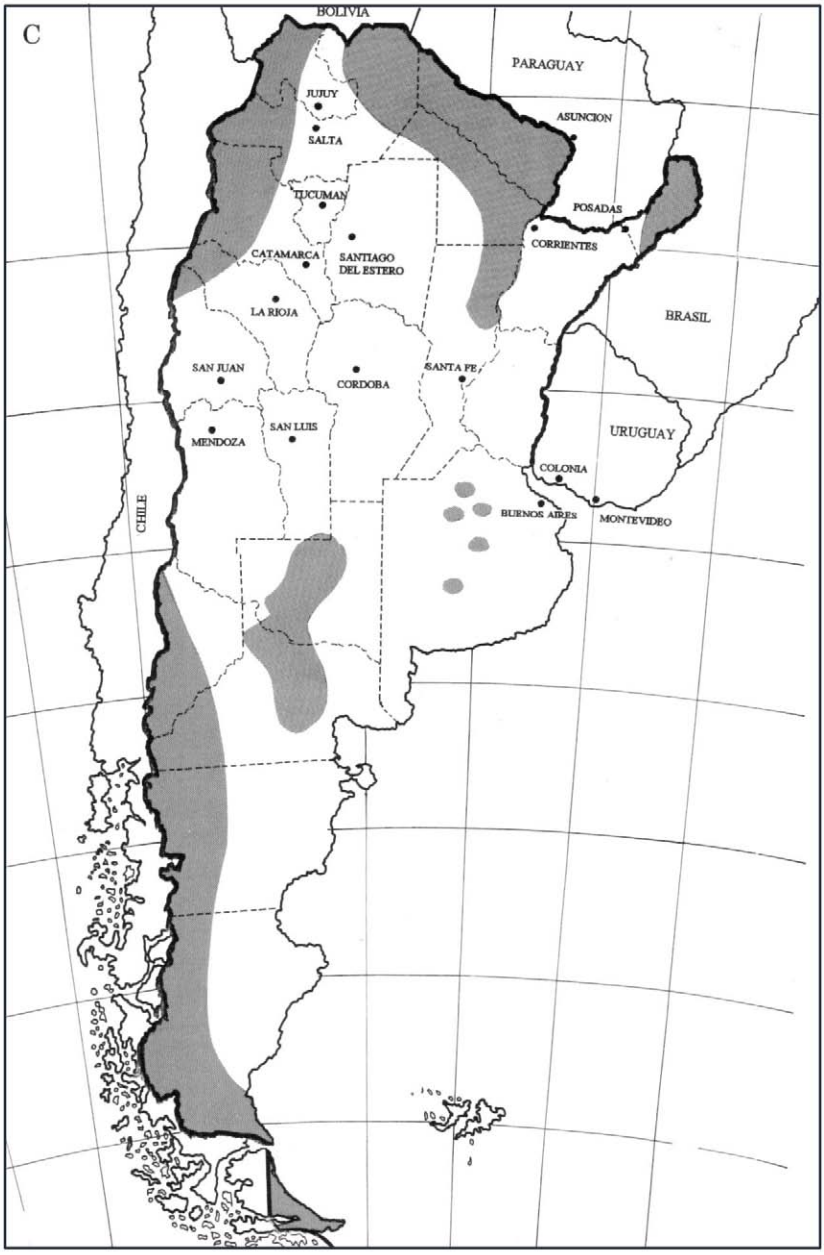


Figure 2 (cont.)

NEW QUESTIONS THAT ARCHAEOLOGY BROUGHT FORTH

How could this historic information be translated into archaeological terms? If we were to accept the traditional historiographic version, we certainly would have found the traces of a true village with mud architecture, all sorts of cultural material remains, and hundreds of buried bodies. But if we are prepared to accept the general picture described up to this point, what we have is a small enclosure of several huts, one being used as a church, another as a somewhat better house for Mendoza, but only huts all of them, irregularly surrounded by a low earthen wall that enclosed the area. As to the physical location, even though the official hypothesis says the village occupied the space where Parque Lezama is today or somewhere else in the close vicinity, a recent detailed study promoted by the excavations has shown that in fact none of these traditional versions were based on solid ground, or, to put it differently, all of them contain elements that would make them partly true (Patti 1996). But historic documents regarding Parque Lezama, as also other sites in and out of the city, have been permanently used in an arbitrary, acritical way, by picking up those pieces of information that best suited those hypotheses historians wanted to present as valid. From historic documents, it is not possible to find the exact location of the first village, while an uncompromised analysis of all positions taken about this subject allows for so many interpretations that one cannot simply "make a choice." Therefore, we made the decision to excavate Parque Lezama and its slope down to the river and found no evidence of objects or architectural remains of those times. Based on these results, research and excavations are being permanently performed at other possible locations of the first village, as suggested in historical documents.

Of all descriptions available, featured by the lack of information and parsimony at the time of presenting explanations, those writings that have been more frequently referred to are the ones by Francisco Villate, Pero Hernández, and Martin González, together with the work by Ulrich Schmidl. However, there is a text that deserves some attention, since it is the only one that mentions dead bodies as a material fact: it is a writing by Father Antonio Rodríguez, who states that six hundred people died at the site. He says "they had no burials", and makes a statement about "the city, tomb of the dead", suggesting the corpses were left on the spot, unburied, when they left in 1541 (Leite 1948:173).

In our search for that ghost town, we are prepared to accept that the ground where Parque Lezama stands has been greatly disturbed by

construction during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; nevertheless, it is also a fact that not a single ceramic fragment was found that could be associated with the sixteenth century. Other evidence of the first Buenos Aires is the remains of a wreck discovered last century at the entrance of the Riachuelo (Romero 1928); these remains, however, have not been studied in depth after 1926. Also, there are a few occasional findings and a colonial site reported by Carlos Rusconi (1928; 1940; 1956). Another matter that contributes to the general confusion is that little or no attention has been given to the changes that occurred in the regional topography, particularly in regard to the flows of the Luján River, a fundamental issue when it comes to reading historic documents (Molina, 1956).

None of the excavations conducted in the city have led to the discovery of archaeological contexts that could be associated to the times of the first settlement; ceramic fragments dated for those years have been found, but never within a context. In recent years, a study of surface archaeology in parks and plazas has been accomplished, including open areas on the old slope of the river, south of the city (Malbrán and Lanza 1997). Bearing in mind that great changes and ground movements have taken place there, ceramic of that dating has not been found that would support the hypothesis of a number of nontraditional historians (Furlong 1968). The situation is identical for the slope in Plaza San Martín and for other proposed sites, as for instance the river banks of the Tercero del Sur (Cardoso 1911). Thus, either Buenos Aires had nothing to do with the established ideas, being only a historic or historiographic myth, or it was placed somewhere else, or the process of destruction of the urban soil has been so intense that not a single evidence remains (Schávelzon 1992b).

There is another question to be answered about this frustrated Buenos Aires that has to do with the real lifestyle of its people. Old descriptions talk about starvation and despair, but they also talk of settlers refusing to move north to Asunción. This can be understood in many ways: we can think that in the beginning things were difficult but that the situation later improved; we can also suppose that fishing and cultivating the fields made life easier, or even consider that mortality left only a small number of settlers, closer to what the available resources in the area could provide for their survival. But even though the issue of starvation comes forth time after time, we would have reason to conclude, when reading historic documents between the lines, that conquerors were in fact wealthy in terms of material culture. They were in a position to pay important amounts of money, by signing documents on future *findings* of gold, to the trader

León Pancaldo, whose vessel, fully loaded with merchandise, sunk just off Buenos Aires. The list of goods stored in Pancaldo's ship that were sold to the conquerors is amazing: in addition to slaves there were dozens of cases with delicate fabrics, hats, combs, sewing materials, stationery, glass, flasks, knives, perfumes, hat feathers, suits, stockings, silks, velvets, fine Dutch linens, tools, preserves, cheese, garlic, capers, soap, sugar, pepper, saffron, and so on (Comisíon Oficial, 1941-II:236–242). According to Schmidl and others, hunger was of such dramatic proportions that people practiced cannibalism; hard to believe, but in fact settlers did not sacrifice their horses for meat, and these animals were still in the region in 1580. Perhaps historiography wants to make a special emphasis on the hardships endured by the first settlers, leaving aside any comforts they might have enjoyed. It must also be taken into consideration that most descriptions were made either at the heat of controversy, or by the real actors themselves—those interested in outlining personal merits—or by third parties involved in promoting legal actions against Mendoza. A wise and in-depth revision of historic documents that refer to the first Buenos Aires is still to be made, and archaeological research must by no means be interrupted.

Pedro de Mendoza and his captains failed all the way: they could neither conquer nor colonize the region, they did not fill their pockets with gold and precious stones, and they proved incapable of founding a viable city. The fact that expeditioners were settled in one of the richest soils on earth, the pampa, wider and fitter for agriculture and cattle raising than any other known region in Europe, makes the outcome of this enterprise total nonsense. What was left of this adventure? The foundation of prosperous Asunción, with such an intense blend of human groups that by 1574 Juan López de Velazco reported 300 vecinos and 2,900 new births, and by 1600, Antonio de Herrera reported 400 Spaniards and 3,000 mestizos. This resulted in the emergence of the first regional and urban structure, providing a true support for the new foundation of Buenos Aires and the consequent marginality of Asunción (Figure 3).

In the territory, other cities were founded that would not prosper; such was the case with San Lázaro, founded in 1527 as the first settlement. In the vicinities of Asunción, in 1557, the Ciudad Real del Guayrá was founded close to Villa de Ontiveros, another small village founded in 1554, and in Salto Grande the Villa de San Juan, in 1552, which disappeared three years later. Closer to Buenos Aires, Zaratina de San Salvador, at the eastern bank of the river?, was founded in 1573 by Juan Ortiz de Zárate, who was also ordered to repopulate Buenos

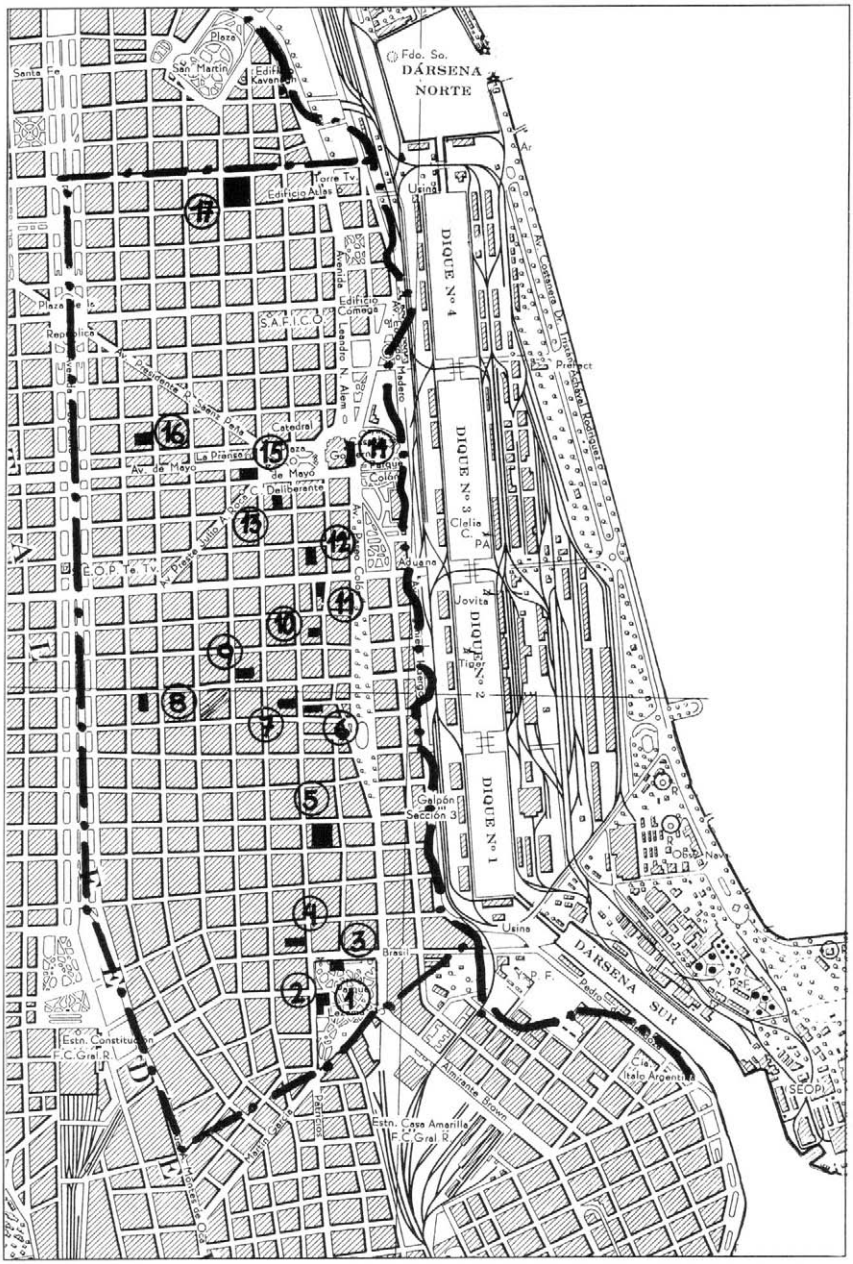


Figure 3. Area under survey and old banks of the river. The excavated places are: (1) Lezama Park; (2) National Historic Museum; (3) Barriles House; (4) 1469 Defensa Street;

Aires right where it used to be, and if this were not possible, at some other appropriate location; in any case, the repopulation efforts lasted less than one year. Like Buenos Aires, there were other settlements that were founded several times: Villa Rica, founded three times; Santiago del Estero, founded in four different locations; Santa Cruz de la Sierra, founded twice; Santa Fe, also founded twice; Talavera de Madrid or Esteco founded in three different places; and San Miguel de Tucumán founded twice. San Salvador existed between 1574 and 1576, close to where Caboto had built his fortress; Villa Rica del Espíritu Santo was founded in 1577 and moved the following year; Santiago de Xerex existed in Paraguay from 1593 to 1632; and Concepción del Bermejo, was founded in 1585 and abandoned in 1632.

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(5) San Telmo Church and Residency; (6) Peña House and *conventillo* at 774 Defensa Street; (7) 751 Defensa Street; (8) 830 Chile Street; (9) Coni Press at 680 Perú Street; (10) Elía House at 531 Balcarce Street; (11) Michelangelo—old Huergo Stores—at 433 Balcarce Street; (12) 350 Moreno Street; (13) Ezcurra House at 455Alsina Street; (14) Government House and old New Customs House; (15) Cabildo and Old Victoria Houses; (16) Arlt Square, old Public Hospital; (17) Pacífico Galleries.

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2 A Long Road to Becoming a City

FOUNDATION AND EARLY TIMES (1580–1620)

There were two main reasons why the city of Asunción took the place of Buenos Aires between 1541 and 1580: Asunción was a safe harbor for new conquering expeditions, and an adequate starting point from which it would be possible to discover the rich Sierra de la Plata, and it served both purposes well. It was not an easy harbor to approach, and this depended on the season, the water flows, and the winds. At times, the journey from Buenos Aires would last three months and take the lives of many sailors, but all in all, it was a secure and stable shelter within the vast and unknown geography of South America. It was from Asunción that a number of expeditions departed, always heading west, in search of those treasures the conquerors dreamed of; however, they could not pass through the hostile natives, the jungles, and the mountain ranges, and Llanos de Mojos and the surroundings of old Chuquisaca (Sucre, today) were far away. Potosí and the silver mines were to be discovered later from Lima, and Perú was to be the sole beneficiary of all that wealth.

Asunción itself was in the process of expansion, and mestizos were eager to become landowners and to have as many natives to serve them as possible. According to the Spanish law, this could only be possible through a merced real, a grant coming directly from the king, or a repartimiento, the right to own land by being a founder of a new city. Therefore, it was necessary to organize new foundational expeditions so that Europeans, by becoming "founding members," would be entitled to receive land, lots within the new cities, and Indian encomendados. By mid-1570, the king insisted on the idea of planning new foundational expeditions that were to head south, not only east or west. Asunción was totally isolated in the middle of the forest, with little or no possibility of opening a regular trail to Lima, the grand Spanish capital city in South America. Thus, their only possibility of contact with the outer world was the Río de la Plata.

Meanwhile, knowledge of the territory had been increasing, thanks to the expeditions that swept the region, covering huge distances always

in search of El Dorado. In 1544 Francisco de Mendoza had separated a group of men from the Diego de Rojas expedition, taking them down from Tucumán to the Río de la Plata; their final destination was where Sanctis Spiritus used to stand. In 1553, Francisco de Aguirre arrived from Santiago del Estero, following the Salado River up to the Carcarañá, and in 1560 Gregorio de Bazán did the same (Leviller 1976). The austral region of the continent was being explored, and information was carefully gathered, a fundamental task the first conquerors had overlooked, to initiate a well-organized colonization venture.

From Asunción, Juan de Garay, with approximately eighty criollos and a small group of Spaniards, started a journey to the south to found a new city or to repopulate Buenos Aires, if at all possible, at the mouth of the river. Santa Fe was the first city he founded in 1573, also known as Cayastá, and in 1580 he succeeded in founding Buenos Aires once more, right where it was formerly located, or at least, somewhere in the close vicinity.

What was the South America of 1580 like? Things since 1536 had certainly changed. Potosí was the heart of productive activities and the city where money was spent, while the political administrative center was the magnificent Lima, which officially monopolized all commerce in relation to Portobello, being also the seat of authorities. Reaching either city from Europe was not an easy task, and there were only two options: first, to navigate across the Atlantic Ocean and then cross the continent through Panamá; or second, to navigate to the far south, go through the dangerous Magallanes Channel, and once in the Pacific head north again, to reach the final destination. Both journeys were too long and full of risks. Once in Potosí and Lima, the goods brought from Europe were redistributed in the region using the old Inca trails, which were long and dangerous. This regional structure was already completed by 1580: Lima played the part of capital city with about 10,000 inhabitants, while Potosí was more extended and wealthier. To the south, there was Santiago del Estero, to the east, Asunción and Santa Fe, and to the west, under Chilean administration, some few small places. East of the Andes, in Argentine territory but under Chilean control, there were Mendoza and San Juan. In any case, south of Potosí the region was only a marginal territory, clearly farther apart from the prosperity lands of Spanish America that were centered in Mexico and the Caribbean. In 1580 there were 150 founded cities between Colombia and Mexico, while south of Colombia there were only 65.

Buenos Aires served two purposes: first, the need of Spain to keep watch over the Portuguese border, as they threatened to expand to the Río de la Plata; and second, the possibility of opening a straight and

safer route for trading with Potosí. These two functions allowed for the city's survival in the following two centuries.

Things were not easy, as traders from Sevilla, with the backup of Lima, were fiercely against the possibility that Buenos Aires could trade freely or even have a port of its own, as this would result in the fall of their commercial monopoly. The viceroy in Lima took immediate action, demanding repeatedly the depopulation of Buenos Aires. For this reason, the port was only allowed to operate in 1776; until then and for a long time after, local traders developed their commercial activities by means of an underground, illegal, and very efficient system of contraband. But Spain, on the other hand, and due to the existing situation with Portugal, was not in a position to do without a stronghold and military forces on the spot, so one way or another, Buenos Aires was still being provided with the necessary support to keep growing. The city was a border, it was frontier and periphery, but it also was located precisely at a crossroad from which it would be feasible to build an alternate commercial structure in Hispanic America.

It is within this framework of confronted interests, palace plottings, struggles over the control of routes for trading, and the activities of a local harbor that illegally imported and exported European goods that Buenos Aires spent its earlier days. That unauthorized port allowed for not only the entrance of products that at times were indispensable for survival, together with others that were to be further traded in Potosí, but it also became, in a very short period of time, the way foreign cargoes of illegal silver were smuggled out of that city, which was one of the most productive silver mines in the world. To comply with legal regulations, mine owners were forced to pay an exhorbitant tax to have the silver stamped, so they found a way to send it to Buenos Aires unstamped, from where it was further forwarded to Europe. The city played a crucial part in connecting roads, being also the seat of a small military and administrative bureaucracy that was expected to guard the frontiers of the kingdom. Buenos Aires was a frontier, but it was also a centrifugal point that became within two centuries a center with a periphery of its own; as a consequence, Santa Fe was depopulated and Asunción casted into oblivion.

In fact, Buenos Aires did not stand in the middle of nowhere (Figure 4). Even though the Spaniards always considered the territory as a *desierto*—desert is the word that was used to define the hinterlands until the end of the nineteenth century—the territory in fact had other owners, namely, the natives. Controversies still arise regarding the real population in the region and the ethnic composition of the original dwellers, the Querandíes. The city had been situated in a territory that was a

frontier between different Indian cultures, in a zone of contact linking at least two important groups: the Guaraníes, at the far south, and the Pampa groups, which included the Querandíes, at the far west (Outes 1897; Martínez Sarasola 1992; Caggiano 1995), as well as other smaller groups like the Chaná. They would all share that area during the summer season to catch fish, just as Mendoza had observed in the past; when harvesttime came they would go away, leaving the Spaniards on their own. Even though their agricultural bases were unimportant, they did cultivate the fields, particularly with corn (maize). They were not nomadic like the Spaniards believed, but they moved along preestablished circuits depending on resources and on the seasons. And even when the different ethnic groups got together for battles, to form a fierce and impressive force, as Mendoza himself had experienced at the time he was sieged, in reality they were easy prey for Garay's soldiers, and the natives that had joined them deserted them after a short time. Available information suggests that population in the Pampean region at the time of the conquest amounted to 55,000 people, in the delta of the Paraná River to 10,000, and that Guarani groups altogether could have amounted to 33,000 people (Martinez Sarasola, 1976).

The scarcity of purely pre-Hispanic aboriginal findings within the extended city limits has to do with this intermittent occupation of the zone. Indian objects have been found in Buenos Aires at different times (for a list, see Rusconi 1928; 1940). In 1905 a group of Indian objects without a single trace of colonial material was discovered inside the Government House. They were mostly lithic objects of which only a small number were published (Leguizamón, 1919: 240–243); all other findings include historic materials (Figure 5). When comparing the situations in Buenos Aires and Cayastá, they appear to be totally different: our surveys of the Santa Fe collections, from the urban area only, yielded an average of nearly 90% Indian pottery and 10% European remains, while in Buenos Aires this relation is basically inverse. The reasons for this will be explained later in this book.

The mortality of Aborigines occurred in the battlefields, and their fear of being forced to work for strangers produced a huge and fast dispersion, to such an extent that by the seventeenth century the few Querandíes left were almost a curiosity. When Garay fought them at a place later known as De la Matanza, what they perpetrated was plain and simple human butchery that added to that dispersion. So when he distributed the defeated Aborigines among his soldiers, they were a conglomerate of many different cultural groups. For this reason, the Guaraníes that remained in the neighboring northern region were, in their future history, tightly bound to the history of Buenos Aires and to

Figure 4. Buenos Aires: a coastal view, unknown author, printed in Holland by Frederik de Witt ca. 1696. The city looks pretty much the same as it probably was at the time of its founding, a century before (Archives of the CAU).

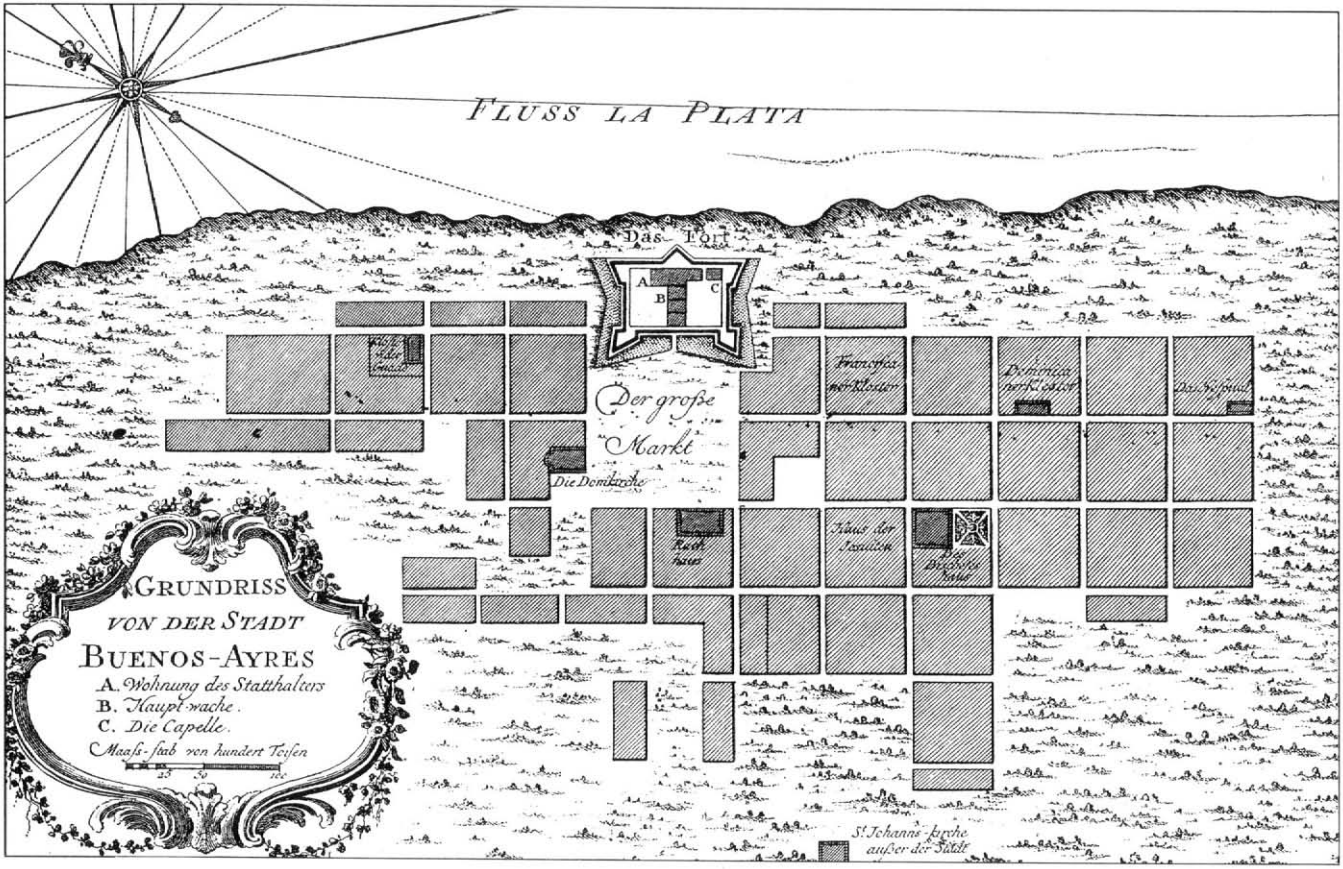


Figure 5. Schematic plan of the city published by Father Francois Charlevoix in 1796 in the German version. The author has shown only the blocks with a more dense occupation, the Plaza Mayor. the fort, and the major churches (Archives of the CAU).

the Spaniards, until the nineteenth century. In turn, the Pampas would keep their distance and freedom through an endless series of armed confrontations.

In October 1580 Garay completed the distribution of land among his sixty-three fellow conquerors and a week later he gave away the estancias along the coastal line, encountering no resistance from the natives. Shortly after he made a long journey south, a hundred miles by the shore to become more familiar with the territory, and again, he found no resistance. What was going on? What was it that had changed since the times of Mendoza? Aborigines had been migrating to the inlands for a century. The conquerors had set foot in the new territories with such violence and cruelty that native groups, following repeated negative experiences, must have decided it was better and safer for their people to step aside. In their annual raids, they never set foot in that area again.

The Spaniards had completed the stage of conquest and settled in cities that were already significant for the times and the region. Potosí was the most important center, with 120,000 inhabitants in 1580 and 160,000 at the beginning of the following century. Trade networks had been organized, and even though these were precarious, traders accepted the risks and obtained amazing profits, earnings they could not have even dreamt of back in Europe, of sometimes over 1000%. Silver was moved by the tons from Potosí to Lima, and many of the future great cities were already founded and stable: at the viceroyalty of Perú there were nineteen towns of Spaniards within Lima's jurisdiction, thirteen in Charcas, and eleven in Chile. There were also hundreds of Indian villages that had been moved elsewhere, and numerous others that had disappeared. In other words, a first urban-regional structure had been organized, together with a network of roads interconnecting cities and towns. By 1630 only a half century after the second foundation of Buenos Aires had taken place, Hispanic America had founded all the capital cities that were to exist; in Charcas there were thirty-seven cities, nineteen in Lima, and ten in Chile (Hardoy and Aranovich 1973–74).

Simultaneously, a significant change of mentality had taken place: it had become apparent there was no more gold to rob nor villages to plunder, so the few possible ways of generating profits were through trading, agriculture, or mines exploitation, but there were no mines in this region, which produced a kind of migration that had nothing to do with the waves of adventurers that traveled to Mexico, Perú, or directly to Potosí. Within two generations' time, between 1536 and 1580, the rapid and abrupt blend of ethnic groups also helped to facilitate

changes among the founders; they were no longer soldiers and adventurers, but people whose expectations were concentrated on becoming landowners and having natives work for them.

There was also a third issue: in spite of Lima's strong position of being opposed to the existence of Buenos Aires, the presence of at least one fortified plaza at the entrance of the Río de la Plata was indispensable for Spain's military strategy, which was aimed at preventing a surprise attack from the Portuguese or the English pirates. Others were moved by their interest in breaking Sevilla's monopoly, finding alternate routes for trading, both with Potosí and the central region of South America. At this point, the question of contraband was not yet a concern. But the Río de la Plata was seriously considered as a promising possibility for producing a change in the roads system of South America by replacing the complicated Pacific routes with others much more straightforward through the Atlantic. Interests involved were enormous, and Buenos Aires remained caught in the middle of that struggle for two centuries.

Thinking in terms of geography and considering the huge physical dimensions of South America, it is easy to conclude that the trip from Spain to Potosí in the terms established by the Sevillian monopoly was a true ordeal. From Cádiz to Nombre de Dios in Panamá, it was a forty-day navigation including a stop in Canarias. Then, travelers had a two-day trip by land to cross the isthmus through treacherous, tropical jungles, considered both dangerous and violent. Once on the Pacific side, they had approximately ninety days by ocean to the port of El Callao in Perú (there was always a forewind while sailing south; the trip back north was much quicker, as winds were usually right aft), and from El Callao, they were still a few weeks away from Lima and still more from Potosí, traveling by land. Moreover, for several years, a water route was opened between El Callao and Arica or Tarapacá, followed by a short trip by land. Traders from Arequipa had shut down both ports, forcing convoys to enter into their cities, and producing for them additional incomes. And still, travelers had to make their way down to Tucumán first and then to Buenos Aires. All in all, these cargos arrived in Buenos Aires one year after their departure date; in the process, prices had been increasing and were out of control. Opening a way through the Atlantic would be much simpler, and austral cities, including those located in Chilean territory, were anxious to have a harbor in Buenos Aires or anyplace else in the surrounding area.

The city of Buenos Aires was traced following the pattern of the West Indies, in square blocks with sides of 140 varas, with a main central plaza close to the river, a fort on top of the slope, and public build-

ings all around that plaza, which was also used as a big marketplace. In another chapter a detailed description will be provided on how the land was distributed and used; however, there was a clear difference established between the city in itself, called De la Santísima Trinidad, and the port as a separate entity, called Santa María del Buen Aire. Only much later both entities would become one, known from then on simply as Buenos Aires.

It would seem that not before long the plan of the city became unsufficient, even though most of the parcels were left unoccupied after Garay's repartimiento. However, records were to be written detailing the movement of newly arrived neighbors and all those empty parcels. In 1602 the trazado was enlarged and the original distribution modified. In any case, the basic idea of a city that opened to the river was enforced until the mid nineteenth century. Later, the river would apparently vanish, both in terms of the landscape inhabitants of Buenos Aires were used to seeing every morning, and in the use they made of it: the city turned its back on the Río de la Plata (Figure 6).

The study of that changing process has been a number-one priority in archaeological works, inasmuch as no remains were left of the foundation of the two initial centuries of history in the city, with the exception of the urban plan. Archaeology has allowed us to take the first steps in understanding the changes that occurred in the use of the urban soil, the lots, and the different architectures. Together with historic information, which is abundant since the eighteenth century, we are now able to see how construction works developed in the earlier times. It is clear that the first architecture was modest, simple, and showed little differences between the houses of the rich and the poor. Even though their social status or wealth would vary greatly, their habitats did not, or at least those differences were not too obviously outlined in private households. There were no public buildings except churches, and they looked much like the rest of the city's constructions until well into the seventeenth century; Buenos Aires was still a place at the border of the empire.

The first dwellings were built with reed grass covered with mud and had straw roofs; the structure was supported by wooden logs. Descriptions of white people's houses can be made based on examples observed in Santa Fe La Vieja (Calvo, 1990), but in Buenos Aires, houses had no perimetrical roofed galleries, which were built at the front only. They seem to have been quite similar: two thick parallel walls to form a stretched house placed within the large lot, with one, two, or three rooms. Houses, though modest, were big and comfortable for the prevailing standards and offered the possibility to progressively

Figure 6. Aerial view of the Plaza de Mayo, the original Plaza Mayor, the present Government House built on top of the old fort and the downtown area, where excavations have been carried out. The small white building at the far end of the square is the Cabildo (photograph by Florian von der Fecht).

grow by adding extra rooms. It was not too difficult to replace reed grass with tapia walls, or to add roof tiles to enhance the aesthetics. This kind of ceiling was used for the first time by the early seventeenth century, but their cost was high. Only early in the eighteenth century did the use of brick became popular (Furlong 1946a).

Historic documents describe houses with two or three *aposentos,* or *sala* and *aposento,* while the yard spaces were either occupied with orchards or left empty. People eventually had one or more domestic animals (Torre Revello 1957; Schávelzon 1994). Most daily activities, including the laundry, cooking of meals, and eating, were carried out in the open. The hearth was protected against one of the walls. Infants played in the whereabouts, craftsmen worked in the outside, and animals roamed freely. With the exception of the few months of cold weather, though there was no snow in wintertime, the family developed all activities in the yard. Limits between properties were virtual: sometimes cacti were planted, or ditches were dug, or a few wooden logs would be put in place to separate the lots, but that was a secondary problem in those times; there are very few known cases of owners who put a fence around their properties.

At least in the theory, the trazado of the city had determined it was a settlement for Europeans, that is, for white people. The structure of households for the nonwhite was not so well defined: Africans and slaves would share the house with their masters or would occupy a cabin at one side of it, but this was always within the same lot. It is well known that there were owners who had not occupied their lots at the time of the repartimiento; thus, these terrains had probably been temporarily occupied with modest huts, particularly at the southern quarters of the city. In excavations conducted in the area, we have found that the lowest layer was dated between the late sixteenth and the late seventeenth centuries, with the presence of scattered bones of animals, ceramics, iron, glass, and evidence of logs or sporadic occupation of the lots. The zone of the Tercero del Sur clarified, though excavations carried out in Defensa 751, San Lorenzo 392, and Perú 680, that the area, which was frequently flooded and was not among the Europeans' preferences, was occupied in such a way. Natives obviously would not live in lands located within the community land, or *ejido,* at least until the eighteenth century.

Every issue concerning the knowledge we have of material culture in the first century of Buenos Aires is still being revised by means of archaeological survey, inasmuch as contexts or materials from that period are scarce. Concentrating specifically on ceramics, we have determined

a low presence of purely aboriginal materials, more important amounts of mestizo pottery, and an abundance of foreign artifacts. We consider Indian ceramics all objects manufactured with traditional techniques, respecting shape, decoration, and Indian functions, even if they were manufactured in colonial times. What we call mestizo, or Hispanic-Indian, refers to those groups of materials that present indistinctly all or some of these features, mixed with Afro and/or European traditions.

A garbage pit was excavated at Moreno 350 and dated by 1630–1640, at a time when Buenos Aires counted with 200 vecinos and a population of approximately 1,000 people. The pit contained: 6 clearly Indian ceramics, 27 mestizo type, and 59 Spanish fragments, together with 250 fragments of European glass, an English knife, 2 copper fragments, and a variety of construction materials, such as bricks, roof tiles, and stones. This means that within the urban plan, where Europeans and criollos had the privilege of owning lots, a family tableware would include 88% of objects brought from Europe. Until now, archaeology coincided with history: the urban area, its borders, and the ejido showed a concentric pattern, wherein ceramic types, their quality, and the percentage of local and foreign ceramics were inversely proportional. One century later the city was populated by a great variety of ethnic groups, giving shape to a huge human mosaic, thus changing the foundational pattern of a city for whites only into an environment also for the nonwhite. As to the garbage pit on Moreno Street, our attention was caught by expensive and rare bottles for those times that had been broken to recover their tin spouts, probably to reuse them. These situations of wealth coexisting with the scarcity of resources are not rare: living in a frontier sometimes meant the abundance of certain things and the total lack of others.

The white culture in America, rigidly supported even by groups that were not totally Spanish (criollos were not "from the Peninsula'' to those born in Spain), with a high percentage of other Europeans among them, is a good expression of the foundational mentality. A recount of foreigners carried out in 1619 shows that from a total of 200 vecinos, 42 were Portuguese, 2 were Flemish, 1 was Florentine, and 1 was Greek (A.Z. 1957). This would be quite common throughout the centuries, even though the Crown pushed to have all foreigners expelled. The cabildo, on the contrary, stubbornly refused to comply with this demand. Foreigners would be the only ones to accept the responsibility to take care of the craftworks without which urban life would have turned unviable. The presence of people from different European countries has been remarkable since the earliest times; Pedro de Mendoza had brought with him seamen and mercenaries even from Baviera, and

when León Pancaldo's vessel arrived to these shores, fifty Italian traders were on board with plans to stay (Konetzke 1952). In 1569, a list forwarded to the king by Francisco Ortiz de Vergara mentioned 76 non-Spaniards in the region, including 11 Portuguese, 2 English, 5 Flemish, 2 Bretons, 1 Italian, and an expeditioner who had already come with Juan de Garay from Venice (de Gandía 1931). In the early seventeenth century, the owners of the first flour mill were Flemish; in 1607 they attempted to shut down because of the wheat shortage, but they were forced by the cabildo to continue with that activity, as there was no one else to take their place. It should be remembered that from 1587 the city's first exports to Brazil consisted of flour, candle grease, jerked beef, and wool, all of these necessitating considerable handiwork that Spaniards would not do.

Santa Fe la Vieja, Buenos Aires's twin city, has provided many good opportunities to observe a rich collection of European ceramics of the period between 1570 and 1660: there are a majority of fragments from Spain and from Italy, such as the Faenza Compendiaro, Montelupo Polychrome, and Faenza White, Westerwald stoneware from the Rhin, the Sgraffito from North Devon in England, and Ming porcelain from China. Obviously, those products were to be absorbed by the urban elite, but there is an issue history has not clarified as much as archaeology, namely, the remarkably complicated interculturality existing in the cities, even at the heart of the white dominant society. Common things that happened among Africans and natives due to the multiplicity of languages and origins, also happened among white people. The huge variety of contemporary ceramic types expresses precisely the issue of multiethnicity.

Simultaneously with the slow growth of Buenos Aires, or perhaps for that reason, a number of events took place that resulted in the modification of the urban and regional structure designed in the sixteenth century. First, there was the foundation of Concepción del Bermejo in 1585 followed by Corrientes in 1587, located halfway between Santa Fe and Asunción, to facilitate the relations with the region of the Guayrá, where the Jesuits would settle shortly thereafter. Asunción was no longer an important city; on the contrary, it was isolated in the jungle, weakened by internal struggles over power, and had very impractical routes from there to Potosí or Lima. Thus, it was no more than a place to stop on the way north, and it became nothing but a dead end. In 1680 Corrientes had 40 vecinos, while Santa Fe had 150, and Buenos Aires had over 200. But in 1700, Buenos Aires had a population four times larger than Santa Fe's. Meanwhile, the trail to Potosí was the passage of increasingly numerous convoys; it was a mirage for adventurers,

craftsmen, treasure hunters, thrifters, and all kinds of people in search for new opportunities after the disenchantment suffered at the Río de la Plata. Córdoba and Tucumán promptly became stopping sites, providing mules for transportation and food and lodging for the two-way travelers. The *yerba mate* from Misiones and wines from Mendoza were being carried up and down the same trail, even before the last years of the sixteenth century.

Poverty was still remarkable, but more remarkable were the increasing differences between the poor and the very few that were really rich. In 1599 Alonso Muñoz made the following statement:

> [I]n this city, there's no wine for the Mass, no wax and no oil to illuminate the Holy Sacrament, no taffeta or other silks, no Dutch linen or other fabrics . . . , no iron, no steel for gunnery . . . or for plow coulters or for sickling wheat, or for axes to cut logs for fuel or to carve wood . . . , there is no sugar of any type, no honey, no preserves or other kind of present to take to the sick, no paper to write on . . . and in general there is a total lack of all things necessary to feed and dress people (Zavala and de Gandía 1980:213).

Fray Sebastián Palla wrote to the king: "there are no four children of neighbours who wear shoes and socks, and what would be the use of talking about shirts" (Zavala and de Gandía 1980:212). The Dutch traveler Heinrich Ottsen, who in 1599 anchored his vessel in the city's harbor, said the people he saw "were all definitely poor, they were hardly wearing any clothes on and their toes appeared through the holes in their shoes" (1945:36).

Probably both descriptions partly distorted reality: in the former case Alonso Muñoz was at the point of requesting an authorization to initiate trading operations with Brazil; in the latter, the traveler in fact only had the chance to observe a very small number of people, and concerning his comment about shoes, he obviously was not aware they were wearing the traditional local *bota de potro.* In any case, these descriptions were not too far from the truth for a good part of the population, while on the other hand, there was a small group of very wealthy Spaniards. There are inventories of their possessions that include impressive items, such as complete silver-made tablewares and other objects of pure gold.

Though European expeditioners have consistently stated Buenos Aires was surrounded by desiertos, the city actually was located in an area with no permanent native settlements but with an intense human traffic. On one side, natives were establishing a frontier that would determine the limits of white people's territories for the following two centuries. Aborigines would be a part of white people's lives, as repartidos in the country establishments or *estancias,* as partners, trading food

and game, and also as enemies, whenever they were compelled to fight to defend their territories. A good portion of the so-called desert was occupied by those Europeans and criollos who owned the estancias, and who introduced changes in the ways of using water resources, forests, the land itself, and with the vaquerías, when they rode to hunt or recover loose cattle. With time, all of this gave shape to the growth of a human crowd that dwelt in the environs, out of the ejido, in the middle of nowhere, composed of Africans, Indians, and criollos, with the common feature of being marginals for some or all of those groups. Thus, the so-called desert became more and more alive, creating a network of tight economic and social relations; the city was not fully aware of this, but nontheless the situation was real. The criollo ceramics that were increasingly being manufactured since the seventeenth century in sites located outside of the city represent the material expression of that reality. Surprisingly, Buenos Aires, unlike Santa Fe, has never produced a ceramic of its own; it was only in the late seventeenth century that ceramic began to be manufactured in very small quantities.

The year 1617 witnessed a significant event for Buenos Aires: Spain made the decision to split the territories of the far south of the continent, appointing the new governments of Paraguay with Asunción as capital city, and of the Río de la Plata, with Buenos Aires as its central city. This gave the city a more important status within the Spanish administrative standards. By 1610 another change in the regional structure was under way, when the Jesuits set foot in Paraguay, a wild region and home of the Guaraníes. This process was initiated as a result of a territorial division of regions that were to be Christianized; in the short term, it resulted in the creation of one of the most sophisticated economic systems ever developed in South America, with the capacity to compete in terms of power and organization with the Spanish empire itself. The system was based on the creation of missions, with Aborigines settled in villages that had been built following new urban patterns, and with a highly organized economy centered in the yerba mate. Indians used yerba mate to prepare an infusion later known as "the tea of the Jesuits"; they at first did not encourage the habit of drinking this beverage, but they would gradually change their minds when they realized the economic potential this plant represented. Jesuits succeeded in their attempt of domesticating the plant and engaged in massive production in extended plantations, where thousands of Indians and black slaves worked. A few years later the missions were producing enough yerba mate to satisfy the demands of the territories between Lima and Santiago de Chile, thus creating a source of power and wealth paralleled only by mine exploitations. That area of development, independent of

route networks and of Spanish trade, was centered in the territories between Corrientes and Asunción, from which the huge packs of yerba mate were carried by land and water to Buenos Aires, and later to Tucumán, Chile, Potosí, and even farther north. This routing was centered in Buenos Aires, adding to the progressive weakening of Santa Fe and to its increasing disadvantaged situation. In the opinion of some chroniclers, in 1600, in Asunción, the average yearly per capita consumption of yerba mate amounted to 345 kilograms; exaggerated as it may seem, it clearly shows the relevance of this product in the region.

In the two centuries that followed, under the guidance of the Jesuits, the Guaraníes were to be the labor force that worked in the construction of public buildings in Buenos Aires (Jesuits were the designers and architects); they were also recruited by the army and their numeric presence in the city was always noticeable. Indian and Hispanic-Indian ceramics typical of Buenos Aires until the late eighteenth century have been produced precisely by this ethnic group, which little by little begun to blend shapes, manufacturing techniques, and European uses in their traditional artifacts, so much so that Guaraníes came to produce imitations of Creamware dishes with coarse earthenware, low firing, and red paint.

Once the city of Buenos Aires was founded and the population established, that is, just after the lots began to be occupied with cabins and modest households, the neighbors decided to send the first vessel to Spain with a cargo of local goods in an attempt to initiate trading. Even though the plan had a good chance to succeed, the first Spanish ship loaded with a variety of products arrived in Buenos Aires only three years later. In the years to come, only one ship per year coming from Spain would touch port. It was evident the harbor would not be the tool adequate to produce the desired benefits, but then new ideas begun to take shape: Buenos Aires could be an intermediary city, a trading center. The possibility to trade with Brazil, an issue that had no chance of consideration prior to the annexation of Portugal to Spain, placed the city at the heart of a huge international commercial movement that was growing day by day. The Brazilian coasts were ports for ships from Holland, Portugal, and all of Europe; from Brazil, goods could be introduced to Buenos Aires to be later distributed in Tucumán and even in Chile, the neighbor country. Buenos Aires was buying flour from Córdoba and Santa Fe, fabrics from the north, and yerba mate from Paraguay. The organization of agricultural activities and cattle-raising were no longer the top priority, as was the case in Santa Fe; instead, it was necessary to obtain the corresponding trading authorizations to bring the situation to normal. This commercial venture,

both legal and illegal, had grown to such an extent that up until 1620, twenty deputies had already been commissioned from Spain in an attempt to stop, or at least to discourage, contraband.

Fortunately for the city (because Spain was compelled to provide additional help and funds) in 1578, Francis Drake, the pirate, had entered the river; from 1582 to 1584 Edward Fenton also navigated the area, and John Drake had sunk just off the Uruguayan shore. In 1586 an English pirate destroyed the first large shipment of imported goods that was to be delivered in Tucumán, an operation organized by Bishop Vitoria, and by 1592, Cavendish had become a constant threat to the port. A few years went by and the nightmare disappeared, but the past events made it necessary for Spain to station an important military force in the city, fully financed by the Crown.

Finally, locals were convinced that import and export operations carried out from and to Brazil could yield sound profits, considering as well the purchase of Africans at low costs. People were aware that the Dutch had been successfully trading in the area for quite some time and wanted to take advantage of the situation by delegating in them the transportation from and to Europe of all merchandise to be traded. These important transactions, which involved large amounts of money for such a small town, contradicted the volume of goods legally imported, which was very much reduced, while prices were high. Contraband, however, was not bringing prices down, so consumption was possible only for a small group with high purchase capacity; the rest were humble, modest people who continually complained about not being able to afford fabrics for clothes and other indispensable, basic goods needed to live with dignity. Unfortunately, most documents from those times concerning people's needs were prepared as annexes to the requests for permission for widening the frames of legal commerce, so they are full of exaggerations that cast a shadow of doubt on the reasons exposed.

The pressure from Lima, Arequipa, and Portobelo added up to the anxiety felt in Sevilla, as all of these cities were facing a potential enemy that threatened their tightly structured monopoly: in 1592 the Viceroy in Lima banned all silver shipments both to Brazil and Spain delivered through routes other than the traditional ones, and the following year commercial operations with Brazil were plainly forbidden. In 1594 this act was confirmed by the king itself. Excuses were many, from tax regulations to control of illegal immigration. Actually, the discussion had to do with a much more important issue, namely, whether the city had a reason to exist or not. In 1622 an *Aduana Seca* was established in Córdoba to avoid the transit of goods to the north; later, it

was moved to Jujuy, a city founded in 1593, but none of these subterfuges really worked out, as every day smugglers found new trails that allowed them to bypass these controls. In 1623 authorities had made the extreme decision of banning the use of metallic currency in Buenos Aires (Figure 9).

Realizing the weakness of their unproductive economic system, people in Buenos Aires requested permission for the entrance of *navíos de registro,* ships that would arrive and depart by means of an exceptional authorization and under severe controls, with at least the very essentials for surviving. This was quite frequent at the margins in the Americas, and permits were granted in different occasions; but it is a fact that the law was violated time after time. The cabildo granted all foreigners the authority to equally export local products, so, some illegal traders bought the permits from other fellow citizens and shipped goods to Europe that had nothing to do with the customs declaration. In turn, when ships made the journey back to Buenos Aires, they were filled with unauthorized products: it was clear that shipment after shipment was being sent to Europe with unstamped silver from Potosí.

With the turn of the seventeenth century, the movement in the port averaged one ship every two months. But ships had alternate hiding places, and they disembarked at the front shore or anchored at deep sites nearby the city to unload contraband directly onto huge wagons; Buenos Aires had no walls and no gates to control the accesses. For two centuries, the port, which in reality was not built as such but constituted only a harbor that ships used for mooring, was at the center of the turmoil: authorities from America and Spain were contradictory, and they would frequently issue permits and authorizations that were later canceled, responding to a variety of momentary interests. Around 1590, the profits produced by slaves and goods smuggled through the river and later taken to Tucumán were between twelve to fifteen times higher than investments originally made.

Although for many years authorities took action to dismantle contraband (such was the case of Hernandarias, son-in-law of the founder Garay), both in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, policies changed at the turn of the century. With the establishment of the fort, the garrison, and its authorities, and even with the complicity of the government, this business of intermediation became stronger and even more profitable; on the other hand, it represented an attractive alternative for making money without working the land (Molina 1966; Moutoukias 1988). The country, in turn, which was very inefficiently exploited and lacked any official support, was limited to an unimportant territory in terms of extension and suffered little changes until the Independence

days, when Aborigines fought to defend their country to their last drop of blood. Buenos Aires lacked a real hinterland (the so-called campaña), unlike other cities in the region; this also promoted the acceleration of highly efficient economic processes which put an end to the potential danger of the city's disappearance.

For a better description of the overall situation, we must add that in 1630 Spain was clearly in the middle of a crisis with a broken economy and a weakened fleet. The Dutch, then, had an expeditious way to take over markets from Brazil and the Río de la Plata, which they did. The first detailed description of the city has been written in 1662 by the Massiac, French brothers (Molina 1955a); the first landscape ever registered has been a watercolor painted in 1628 by the Dutch Johannes Vindboons (Hardoy 1991), and the first map showing in detail the city's geographical situation in relation to the river was also drawn up by the Dutch Heinrich Ottsen in 1599 (1945). Simultaneously, the pluriethnicity of the lower classes and the multinationality of white groups became stronger. This is what material culture reflects in the city, in architecture, and in objects of daily use. Buenos Aires was to be special, it would show a totally different character from that of other cities that would surround it for the following century, namely, Santa Fe, Asunción, Corrientes, or Córdoba.

Buenos Aires was entering the seventeenth century standing at the edge of an abyss, as it was yet to be seen whether people would manage to consolidate the economic structure of contraband and intermediation; otherwise, the city would be hopelessly bound to vanish. The other abominable, unthinkable alternative would be working hard both in the city and cultivating fields. But that was something totally out of the question.

THE COLONIAL VILLAGE: AS IN A HUMBLE EUROPE BUT NOT QUITE THE SAME (1620–1810)

At the beginnings of the seventeenth century Buenos Aires was already founded, the internal physical structure was well delimited, solares, farms, and estancias had been distributed, and the few Indians left in the area had been repartidos. Public spaces, although they were not built, already existed: the cabildo, the churches and convents, the fort, the main plaza, the residency of the governor, were all humble constructions with straw and eventually tiled roofs. The streets were dirty, muddy, and badly drawn, and urban borders were faded due to the illegal appropriation of the land. Some vecinos had become owners

of bigger houses, some others had built general stores or *pulperías,* or even a house for *truques* or a butcher shop; the Plaza Mayor was the open marketplace, with unhealthy smells, muddy trails and dead animals lying on the floor, and it functioned as the central point of the economical and social interchange of the community. The cabildo was a poor building where authorities held meetings in spite of all the uncomforts and the permanent threat of collapse; the cathedral was but a big hut that had to be rebuilt time after time, though that was not an obstacle for the temporal power of religious men. Convents would be moved from one location to the other: the Dominicans had always disliked the location Garay had selected for them, and only after complicated negotiations they were granted a lot on the Calle Mayor, near the Franciscans. The Jesuits, who arrived later, obtained for themselves the block located between the Plaza Mayor and the fort, which had never been occupied in full; the Jesuits, shortly after their arrival, had to move somewhere else. To visitors, Buenos Aires no doubt was a humble city of whites, a Spanish settlement in America; for the local community, this was the southernmost place in the Atlantic and a bastion for Europe, even though the multiethnicity of the population was pointing in another direction (Figure 7).

In the earlier days, the organization in blocks was not fully defined: owners would invade the sidewalks with their constructions; the Franciscans withstood a long trial after being charged for appropriation of streets and blocks that did not belong to them; the Dominicans were forced to take away the flocks of sheep that grazed freely in the village; and in 1608, new plans were drawn for the reorganization of both the village and the estancias. At the time, this was a most important urban enterprise that implied a redirectioning of the city and its hinterland. The regularization of the blocks could only be completed by the early nineteenth century (de Paula 1985; Tenembaum 1989). However, life in the village and its borders was one of scarcity, probably not as dramatic as historic documents say, but the community was not rich in money or possessions. There was more than enough land, but that was of little significance: agricultural exploitation was almost unviable, due to the absence of Indians and the expensive prices of slaves; as to cattleraising, it did not make any sense in a country where the vaquerías were free. Legal and illegal trade was a source of wealth, as were also the exports of leather, skins and tallow, but regardless, there was a high rate of white people living in poverty (Figure 8). Obviously, the current parameters of wealth are not those of the sixteenth century, an issue that has been well clarified by Eugene Lyon (1992), but declarations mentioning white people wrapped in skins because of the lack of fabrics, the nonexistence of

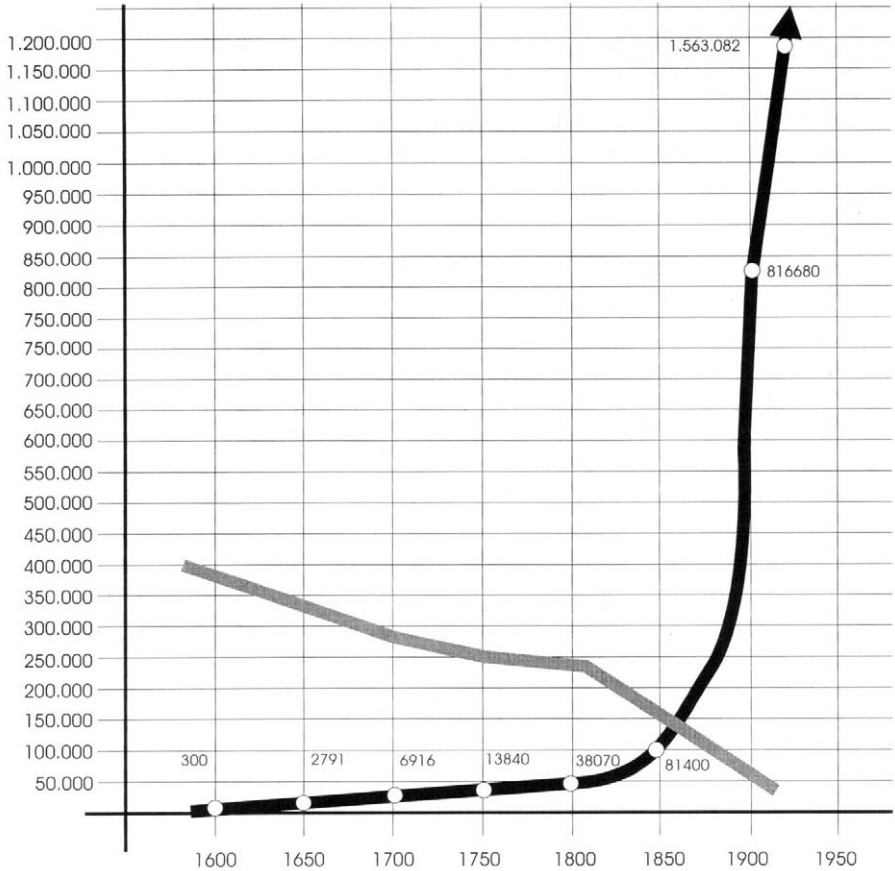


Figure 7. The evolution of the urban population in Buenos Aires and the decrease of the national Indian population.

iron for manufacturing plows, and the fact that some Spaniards had to work with their hands, are indications of extreme poverty. This was not so for everyone, but exceptions were few (Fitte 1980) (Figure 9).

Around 1650, one of the advantages of the village had to do with the remarkable abundance of cattle in its surroundings. There, and partly due to the cattle huntings, a marginal, nonsedentary population was growing of mixed ethnic groups and cultures, which informally acted as intermediaries between the Indians and white people; they were not Indians but certainly they were not white; at that time this was a definition in itself. A life in the frontier was being generated at

Figure 8. Engraving by Leon Palliere from 1864 showing the interior of a humble dwelling, with individuals seated on the floor, eating roasted meat and drinking mate. There is no furniture or decoration except for a cot, a few blankets, and some clothes hanging from a rope (Archives of the CAU).

the border of the empire, with confrontations, conflicts, and alternatives for those who intended to evade the repressive system of the white community. Sophisticated trading mechanisms involving imported goods on one side and cow skins on the other were being established, with urban merchants at one end and Indians from the desierto at the other. They had no real personal contact and acted through intermediaries, but ultimately this gave birth to an ever increasing consumer market of European goods.

In the early seventeenth century, cattle were free-roaming: it was only a matter of hunting, skinning, and then selling the animals should someone be interested in the meat. Often, cattle were killed for the tallow or in order to sell the skins abroad; it was a natural resource that multiplied by itself, much the same as birds and fish. The usual, for a long time, was to refer to skins as a mineral, something that had to be found and extracted. Probably, without this unlimited access to red meat, the village would have turned unviable for the many needy inhabitants of the seventeenth century; but this situation came to an end in the eighteenth century. In 1787 Félix de Azara, charged with delim-

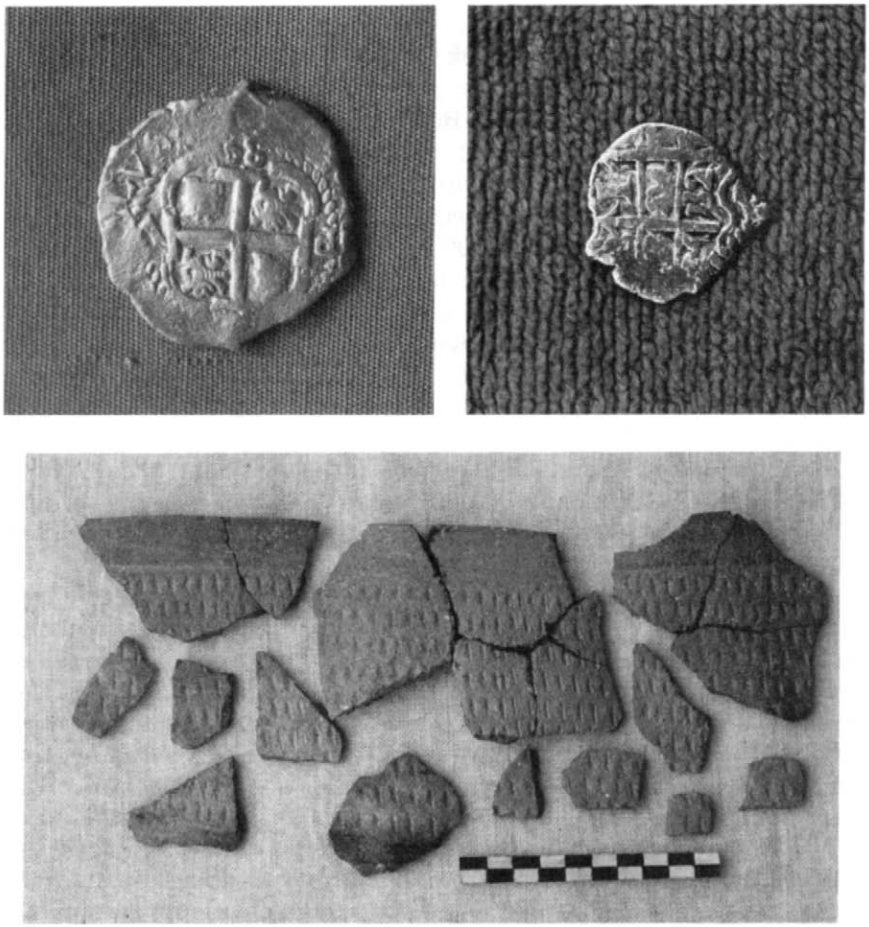


Figure 9. The most precious and the most modest objects: silver from Potosí in the shape of coins dated (above, left) 1689 and (above, right) 1732, and (below) Indian ceramics that maintained shapes, decorations, and manufacturing techniques up to the late eighteenth century.

iting the frontiers between Spain and Brazil, described the problem as follows: "by the middle of this century this precious mineral of skins was exhausted, and as the wild cattle would no longer be found in the *pampas,* the savages were forced to steal herds from farms and *estancias*" (Azara 1943:79).

In 1749 the Jesuit Pedro Parras wrote that there were days when 2,000 bulls and young cattle were killed for their skin and fat while the

meat was thrown away. To satisfy the needs of the village, up to 500 cows were slaughtered per week (Muhn, 1946:133), but no use was made of the blood, heads, foot, legs, liver, and other entrails. In 1719 another Jesuit, Father Antonio Betshon, wrote in astonishment that his Indian companion would kill one young cow per meal (1946:34). When comparing these figures with Europe's, the results show that the entire movement of cattle in the central, northern, and eastern regions of that continent amounted to 400,000 heads per year in the sixteenth century, while in the grand Paris, less than 70,000 heads were sold annually (Braudel 1984: 156). In Buenos Aires alone, without including the hinterland, at least 25,000 heads were slaughtered annually only for feeding purposes. Besides, by the late eighteenth century, more than one million bovines were killed yearly to supply foreign markets with skins, while their meat was wasted. Anyone with a conscience of how valuable food was in other regions of the continent, such as Perú or México, will see that survival in Buenos Aires was possible because of such an abundance of meat during the earlier days, and later, throughout the crisis of the seventeenth century.

This did not mean that the urban diet was only composed of red meats as historiography has intended to show, particularly in writings by foreign travelers of the nineteenth century who were very surprised with what they were witnessing. The idea of such an exclusive diet was discovered by local historians who made it a commonplace topic, which in turn allowed the idea to become a myth sustained to the present times. Recent studies on economic history have shown that red meats were not the unique source of nourishment (Garavaglia and Gelman 1995:77), and so has archaeology. Fauna surveys conducted in garbage pits in Buenos Aires have indicated that even though red meats were important, people also turned to poultry and game, sheep, armadillos, harvest mouses, alligators, and ostriches. A garbage pit containing bone remains dated before 1650 indicated the presence of sheep and cow in a proportion of 1 to 3 (Silveira 1995; 1996).

In the city, it would seem that the great Spanish crisis of the seventeenth century was of no important consequences to growth: by 1650, some community members owned over forty slaves, thus weakening the power of Portuguese traders; between 1620 and 1680, the population grew from 1,100 inhabitants to a little over 5,000. This may seem quite a lot, but in the same period Córdoba had increased its number of inhabitants twenty times. Even though it was developing, the city in wider terms was still humble and modest: it still was the most austral port city in the Atlantic, influenced by the conflicts of being a frontier that had to be watched over, and a border no one cared about, with a port that generated wealth to certain groups and poverty to others (Figure 10).

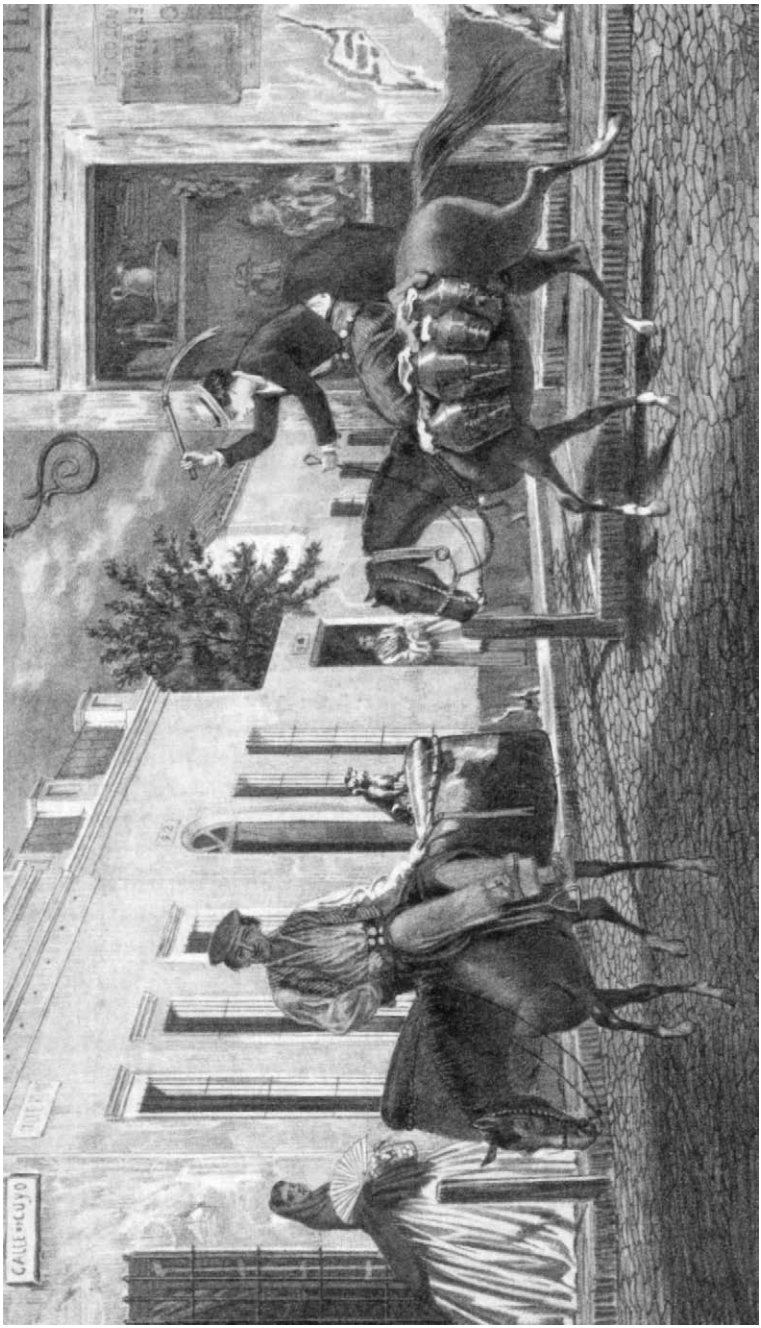


Figure 10. Everyday urban life in the early nineteenth century, representing the Spanish tradition in a painting by Leon Palliere; the milkman and the baker riding horses and the store where White Refined Earthenware bottles from England were already being sold (Archives of the CAU).

One of the drives that helped the dynamics of the city's existence and contributed to its consolidation and growth was the emergence of conflicts with the Portuguese, in Brazil. The foundation of Colonia del Sacramento in 1680, a village presently located in Uruguayan territory, took place in a framework of increased armed confrontations; Spain recovered Colonia del Sacramento and this territory became the new seat for smuggling activities at the front bank of the river. From Brazil or from Europe all products arrived in that village and were thereafter transported to Buenos Aires in barges. There was nothing authorities could do to fight this new smuggling system (assuming they did want to do something about it), as flat boats would sneak along the hundreds of islands in the delta to unload merchandise any place they chose in the extended shores. The river was increasingly becoming a linking element instead of a border; it was a frontier that alternately opened or closed, depending on which of the two empires was invading, but smugglers were not in the least affected, and their round trips continued with no interruptions. Some years later Montevideo was founded, and the city experienced the same sudden growth as Buenos Aires in the eighteenth century; Montevideo took the place of Colonia and one century later became the capital city of a new country, Uruguay,

All these conflicts made it necessary to increase the presence of armed forces in Buenos Aires, and after 1670, soldiers arrived to stay permanently. In 1674,330 new army units had joined the garrison with the subsequent growth of the white community; these men quickly begun to play an important part in the life of the village, which went far beyond their duties as soldiers. The confrontations with Portugal made it clear that the economic structure in Buenos Aires was weak: every time the resident Portuguese were about to be banned from the city, a last-minute decision allowed them to stay, as they constituted a very precious labor force: they were locksmiths, silversmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, sculptors, or painters, to mention some of the professions, In 1715 there were about 500 soldiers in the city and in 1776 this number climbed to almost 7,000, financed both by Spain and Lima. The role played by this army in the city, as shall be later seen, was of great importance in the following century, particularly in connection with the wars against the Portuguese: Colonia del Sacramento was captured or diplomatically surrendered to the Spaniards in 1705, 1762, and 1777, and to the Portuguese in 1683,1756, and 1764.

The existance of non-Spanish interests in the city was stronger each day, as was also the effective presence of foreigners. The trade of slaves was alternately in the hands of the English, the Portuguese, the French, and the Spaniards, and in an illegal way, the Dutch were cru-

cial for contraband and for the trade of Africans. Together with shipments other merchandise arrived from all over the world: iron from Sweden, knives from Flanders, fabrics from Rouen, engravings from central Europe, codfish from Norway, gin from Rotterdam, glasses from Bohemia, oils from Sevilla, plows from England, repoussé leather works from Russia. Actually, many of these products were delivered in other cities but many others were not, thus making an important contribution to the varied material culture of everyday life observed in archaeology. There are some available lists of the cargos that were eventually confiscated by the government: one of them, from 1719, included indispensable items such as weapons, beer, brandy, powder, wax, cotton fabrics, porcelain from China, rice, knives, mirrors, tobacco, costumes, and so on. Instead, another list of 1727 included clearly expensive objects: toothbrushes, telescopes, ornamental shell combs, marbles, walking canes, rap6 boxes, socks, and even silk stockings for ladies and gentlemen, salt shakers, small gala swords, slippers, silk handkerchieves, skinflints with golden flowers, silver braids, silver watches, and fine hats, among other articles which no doubt were luxurious (Villalobos 1986:34).

The growth and development of the city made room for people to practice other arts and crafts, such as shoemakering, hat making, masonry, and many others activities in which Africans and Portugueses excelled; there were also English doctors. Among the foreigners, with the general label of "Portuguese," there was an important group of *marranos* from different European countries, converts of Jewish origins who had been forced to abandon their faith because of religious persecutions (Kellenbenz 1971). By the end of the eighteenth century, 24% of the white male population, even though most of them were *criollos,* were devoted to some kind of craft work.

In the city, the best organized activity and the one that yielded the highest profits was commerce, be it legal or illegal. Historians have concluded that there were no substantial differences between both ways of conducting business, as these were carried out in one and the same manner, through the same agents, and with the consent and participation of local authorities (Molina 1966; Motoukias 1988). The system was organized by means of a sophisticated mechanism in which there was a coincidence of true necessities, corruption, a cooperation between civilians, the military and the government, everything duly organized and under the strict surveillance of the local oligarchy in control of public administration. Actually, and due to the fact that the city and its fort were in part viables because of illegal trading, Spain showed no great concern. Not only huge amounts of money were collected, but the fort would

be well supported, military expeditions would be conveniently funded, and frontiers watched over. To the Crown, it was indispensable to maintain Lima's privileges, but it was not in a position to depopulate the Atlantic entrance to the continent. This contradiction has been essential for the development of the city, as much as the existence of the Portuguese settlement of Colonia del Sacramento at the front banks of the Río de la Plata. Contraband, the corruption of authorities, and the consent of the militaries, the administrators, and the oligarchy were the tools that allowed for the viability of Buenos Aires, for its growth and development, and finally for playing a central role in the region. The funds in silver for these operations were still coming from Potosí; as a result, the economies of both regions were linked with such tight bonds that risked total collapse.

An additional factor that contributed to the further growth and strengthening of Buenos Aires, precisely when Spain was suffering the severe crisis of the seventeenth century, was the commercial exchange with the Jesuitic missions. In 1644, the population in the missions amounted to approximately 24,000 people, and by 1702 this had almost doubled, climbing to 49,000 souls, while the following century kept a steady 50,000. These production centers of yerba mate, crafts of all sorts, religious art, musical instruments, and books were simultaneously the most important consumers of African slaves in the region. It is true that the economic structure of this missionary system with missions spread over a very extended territory did not allow for an uncontrolled growth, but to Buenos Aires, as the seat of the Proctorship of the Missions, this was a highly dynamizing factor. The production of yerba mate took two routes: to Bolivia, Perú, and Chile, where the Jesuits handled their own operations, and through the Pacific to Panamá, where trading remained in the hands of private producers. Both groups were engaged in a long distance, dynamic exchange of products; iri 1798, Buenos Aires received over 305,000 arrobas of yerba. This accounts properly for the presence in the region not only of European objects but also of pottery from Mexico, Panamá, and Perú. This international network was closely linked with the network of roads that was being created in the territory: to Mendoza, in search of wine and brandy; toward Tucumán, for fabrics and mules; and toward the north, traders for leathers, skins, yerba, timber, tobacco, and lime through the Uruguay and Paraná Rivers.

It must be remembered that the city lacked any port facilities, this is to say there were no specific buildings to carry out loading and unloading works except at the mouth of the Riachuelo, where midsized vessels could moor (Figure 11). Larger ships had to cast anchor one

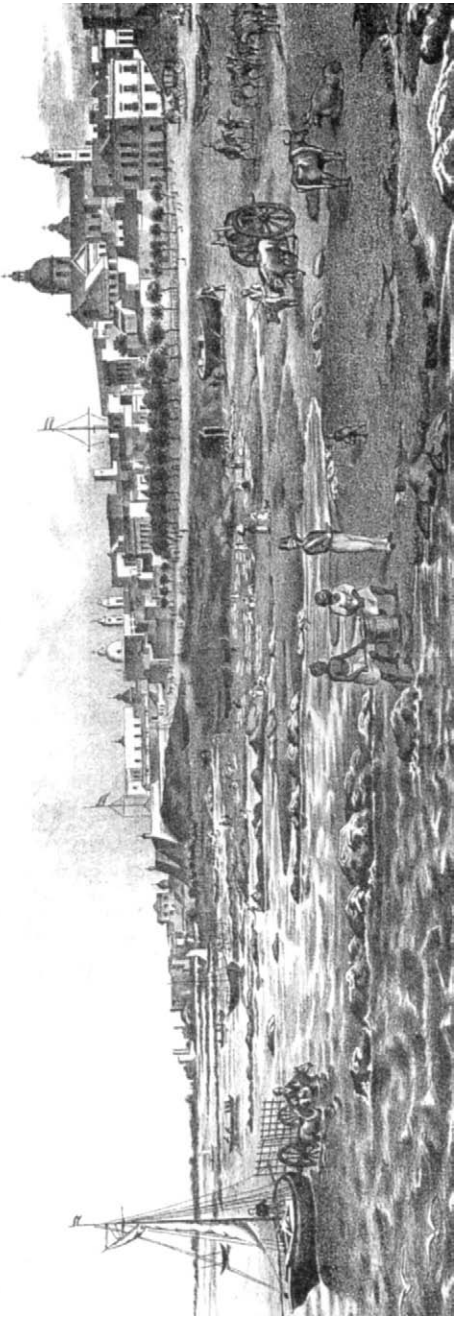


Figure 11. An 1830 engraving showing the river banks and the city with the fort, some major churches, the densely built city, and a wide variety of activities that took place by the river: laundry, fishing, water gathering, shiploading, cattle watering (Archives of the CAU).

mile off the city to be approached by boats, horses, and later by wagons especially prepared with unusually high wheels. A second point to keep in mind is that Buenos Aires has never had walls or gates to help control the arrival or departure of goods, and third, there were other much better natural harbors in nearby areas such as Olivos at the north of the city or Quilmes at the south.

The aboriginal presence in the surroundings, at least up to 1620, was not remarkable and caused no inconveniences worth mentioning: the frontier was respected by both parties involved. The city community was well aware that it constituted a very small white group within a wide territory controlled by Aborigines, so they took every precaution. The first expansion out of the original city limits made them push back the established frontiers, particularly because of the vaquerías or wild cattle huntings. In turn, Indian groups pushed back the new rural settlers, with the novelty that by then riding horses was customary and represented a great advantage to the Aborigines. As to the Aborigines, they were also involved in a process of change that was taking place south of Buenos Aires: the Araucanization, a phenomenon due to the migration from Chile of new and large Indian communities, the Mapuche. In Buenos Aires, people were totally unaware of these events, which would later be the reason of conflicts and even wars between Aborigines and white people (Martínez Sarasola 1992). To the seventeenth-century porteños, the natural zone where they would expand was the *banda oriental,* the front bank of the river, and there they went, disregarding other areas south or west. However, this would be modified with the foundation of Montevideo and the constant efforts made by its people not to depend on Buenos Aires; and they finally succeeded, so the expansion of the porteños had to head southward.

Archaeological ceramics and in general all material culture observed in the city of the seventeenth century presents some features that indicate a strong European presence, mainly from Spain, an average percentage of materials we could call criollos, and the poor existence of artifacts from African and aboriginal origins. Is this an accurate reflection of the incidence each social group had in the city? We tend to think that cultural materials reported have little to do with the number of people that composed each group but instead, that these were related to their significance in everyday life: Africans, who composed 25 to 30% of the population, are represented by less than 10% of the ceramics found.

Besides, there is one ceramic type that correctly expresses the double structure of commercial routes: the Panama Polychrome ceramic

produced in that city between 1600 and 1650. This type has been found in Buenos Aires and in Cayastá and was traded obviously throughout the Atlantic, but it is also found in Catamarca, Mendoza, and Neuquén, arriving from the west entrance of the Pacific Ocean. Most ceramics found corresponding to the seventeenth century were Spanish, in spite of the presence of others with multiple European origins. The tradition from Talavera expressed in the Ichtuknee Blue on White homogenized the whole of the territory until the following century.

By 1650 divisions in the white society were clear and the different features of each group were expressed in architecture, decoration, and individual properties (Figure 12). In 1657 a traveler says that "houses of first class inhabitants are enhanced with draperies and other ornaments and decent pieces of furniture, and all those people enjoying a regular situation are served on silver tableware" (du Biscay 1943:18). He was a trader who visited the city to sell "silks, yarn laces, needles, swords, horseshoes and other iron made objects, tools of all kinds" (1943: 15). This traveler did his business in a city with no port and no

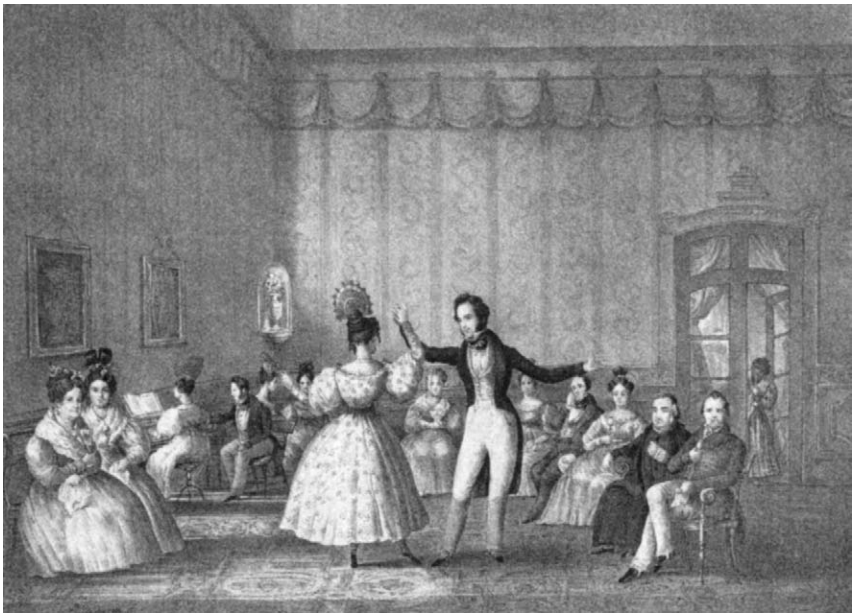


Figure 12. Social life of wealthy families: a tertulia sometime during the 1820s in a painting by Carlos Pellegrini; white families and black servants drinking mate (Archives of the CAU).

authorization to trade freely, and moreover, he was coming from a country that at the time was an enemy of Spain.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the city had a slow growth and occasionally the conquerors would request that other immigrants be sent from Spain "to improve the blood"; for those sticking to the mentality of conquerors, blending was a social regression (García 1955). In 1657 the village had 400 houses, while Santa Fe had 25, and Potosí 4,000; this increase continued until the beginning of the important demographic and economic change that started by the mideighteenth century: in 1744, the city had 10,056 whites, 188 Aborigines, 99 mestizos, 1,150 blacks, 330 mulatos, and 221 pardos. In 1778 these figures had climbed to 24,083 whites, 524 Aborigines, 627 mestizos, 3,837 blacks, 2,997 mulatos, and 1 pardo (Ravignani 1919) (Figure 13).

In the early eighteenth century, exports of skins had become a regular activity; this, together with the intensive consumption of red meats, caused the extinction of wild cattle. Consequently, it became necessary to establish *estancias* or rural establishments where cattle were raised methodically, providing at the same time for a rational exploitation. Thus, land was revalued and so were, socially, the landowners; just about anyone could become a noble by exploiting the land, something that would have been unthinkable in the sixteenth century. The large number of wild cattle hunters and muleteers slowly turned into day laborers in the estancias, and due to their work and the new system, by the decade of the 1720s almost 200,000 skins were annually being sent abroad. Very quickly, huge extensions of land ended up in the hands of a few landlords, giving birth to the latifundists, who were typical of the hinterland for the following two centuries.

However, the increased exploitation of these rural establishments produced a strong reaction in Indian settlements of the surroundings, who by then were almost under the total influence of Araucanian groups. As a response to white people that invaded their frontiers, Indians would attack time after time with their *malones,* and the white would respond with the *malocas,* sweeping away the *tolderías* by fire and sword. This generated a permanent state of war at the frontiers, creating the necessity of establishing the first fort in 1716, in Arrecifes, in an attempt to control the situation. Since then, the most common policy of white people consisted in establishing forts along lines that slowly advanced further on Indian lands, who, in turn, were forced to draw back. Those territories were the home of countless *vagos* and *malentretenidos,* dangerous people who still hunted cattle, no matter whether the animals were owned or not, and who gave shape to a constant commercial movement through the borders.

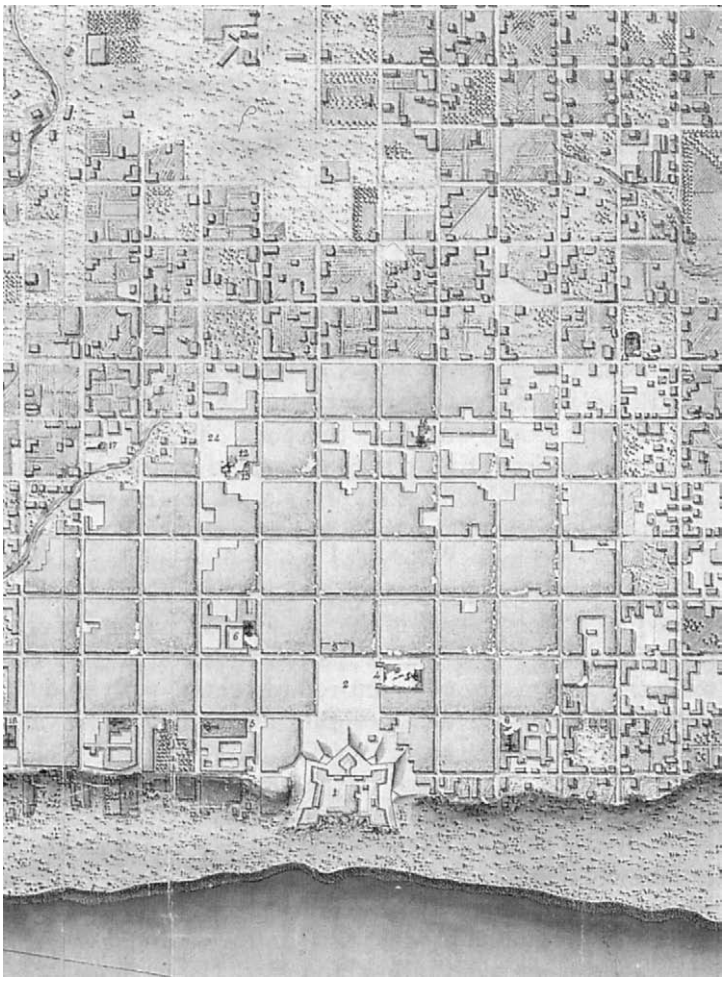


Figure 13. Plan of downtown Buenos Aires around 1790, by an unknown author (to be compared to Figure 6, where the square blocks persist as a consequence of the previous original traza). Buildings begin to appear at the lower section of the river slope (Archives of the CAU).

During the eighteenth century, the city suffered important changes, mainly due to a sudden growth caused by different and intertwined circumstances: the new economic policies of the Habsburgs, the new reigning house in Spain, which pointed to the development of a capitalist mercantilism increasingly intense and liberal; a gradual

opening of the port with the corresponding authorizations to trade freely, a process that concluded in 1776; and to the creation in 1777 of the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and the presence of a viceroy and a court (Figure 14). Another circumstance that had to do with this transformation was the gradual decrease of silver production in Potosí with the subsequent modification in the structure of the northern regional commerce. With the disappearance of this traditional consuming center, it was necessary to build a new network for the circulation of products, but by then the territory was no longer the same. The conditions established in the sixteenth century had undergone profound changes. The proclamation of the viceroyalty by Pedro de Cevallos, who had reconquered Colonia with a fleet of 9,000 men, implied also that silver from Potosí was to leave the continent through Buenos Aires and no longer through Lima, and that the port was also to receive the Spanish mercury to treat that metal. Later, the custom house in Córdoba was shut down, and almost all preexisting commercial taxes and prerogatives were canceled. In 1729, the new city of Montevideo was founded at the front bank of the river, generating an economic structure similar to the one in Buenos Aires (based on contraband and export of skins); as a consequence of the presence of this new competitor, commerce in Buenos Aires had to be accelerated. Montevideo was bound to be the capital city of its entire hinterland, with an outstanding growth in the early nineteenth century, and Buenos Aires would not succeed in eliminating this competitor. The development of Colonia del Sacramento was interrupted, and the city remained as it was, with no significant changes for the following two centuries.

Changes in the porteña economy were under way since the 1740s, with a constantly increasing commerce of skins. Buenos Aires and its surroundings were no longer intermediaries; on the contrary, they exported their own product, a product with an increasing demand in foreign markets together with tallow and fats. Never since 1650 had orders from abroad been of such a volume. This contributed to Buenos Aires emancipation from its former dependence on Potosí and Lima, a positive achievement considering the forthcoming collapse of silver mines exploitation in Potosí (Segreti 1987; Villalobos 1986). The amount of skins sent abroad through the port speaks for itself: during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, exports amounted to approximately 75,000 skins per year; by the end of the decade of the 1750s, skins sent abroad amounted to 150,000 per year; in 1778 they were 800,000, and in 1783, exported skins climbed to 1,400,000 units.

Since the port was authorized and products were easily introduced in the country, Buenos Aires found itself in a position to supply the

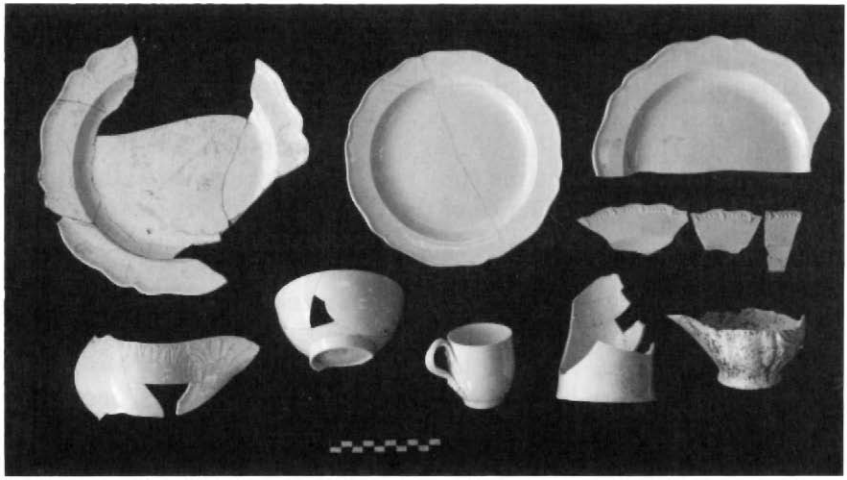


Figure 14. Contrasts between wealth and poverty in the same city and at a same period of time: (above) modest objects made of coarse earthenware of the Afro population and (below) a luxury Creamware set.

internal markets of Córdoba, Tucumán, and the littoral region up to Asunción. This was a very large market, composed of customers who were now able to buy products that in the past were unaffordable as they were brought from Lima, or smuggled into the territory; people could now buy directly and at reasonable prices. In the littoral, the new cattle raising estancias provided large amounts of skins for export, and these added up to the ever larger estancias south of Buenos Aires. Aborigines were being pushed back permanently, expelled slowly but firmly. Struggles intensified, but the whites gained ground and settled.

The simultaneous loss of Potosí as a massive consumer of regional and imported products and the subsequent disappearance of roads, produced an impact on South American economies that is hard to evaluate. The free trade, together with all other circumstances mentioned before, resulted in the collapse of manufactures from the interior: wines from Europe were cheaper than those from Mendoza or San Juan, as Europeans were not forced to pay the exhorbitant taxes charged to local manufacturers, and fabrics from Catamarca were not competitive with fabrics from England. By 1790 England had won the markets of the entire region, followed by France and Germany. Cured, salted meat, the only new industry that was promoted in those times, became one of the main regional products for export and was successfully placed in the Caribbean markets (Oddone 1982). Simultaneously, slave trafficking grew as never before, as an additional advantage to the important shipments of smuggled goods that entered into the country. Africans were brought along, as a consequence of the favorable conditions provided by the new economic flexibility. Spain, in turn, gradually lost the possibility of carrying out long-distance commercial operations, while at the same time was losing control over the American colonies as a consequence of the frequent and devastating wars the Spaniards were engaged in.

In 1806 and 1807 Buenos Aires was invaded twice by England in an attempt to make it a British colony, but after long and bloody struggles they were forced to withdraw. Ships loaded with merchandise produced a strong impact on the local bourgeoisie that was anxious to purchase the new products of the Industrial Revolution. These invasions contributed to the elimination of the little control Spain exerted over the Río de la Plata, and subsequently, former Spanish authorities were replaced by local governments, giving birth to the Independence Wars of the following decade. Interestingly, at the time the English fleet arrived to Montevideo in 1806, there were also several other ships stationed at the port: 11 from Portugal, 16 from the United States, 2 from Denmark, and 1 from Prussia (Villalobos 1986:88) (Figure 15). A

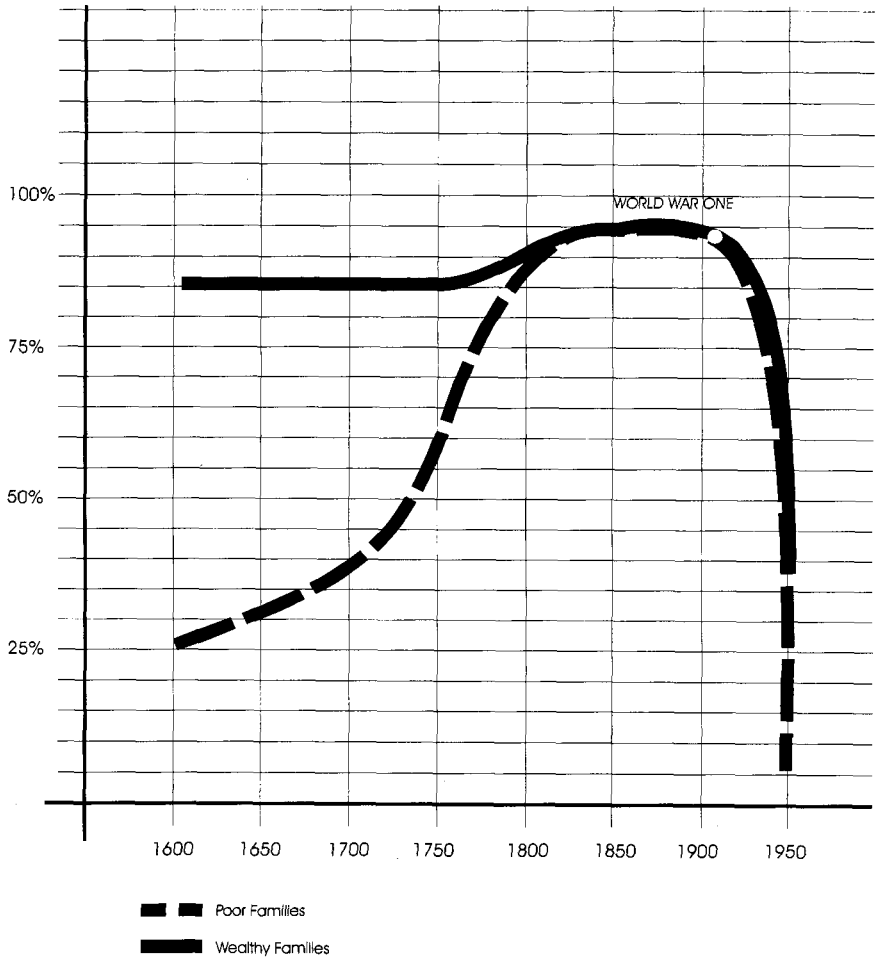


Figure 15. Imported objects: percentages corresponding to the period 1600–1950 obtained from domestic garbage pits of wealthy and poor families.

longing for consumption increased as local wealthy groups grew stronger, a fact that is reflected in residences that gradually grew bigger, and in a greater abundance of expensive, luxurious possessions. Some of these luxury items ended up becoming a part of everyday life, as was the case of silverwares.

The presence of silver in city households, thanks to the frequent cargos that were permanently brought down from Potosí, meant that

people in the community could afford it with no great efforts, as it was an expensive item but by no means prohibitive; besides, there were different qualities and prices. A survey carried out with a little over 1,400 wills and inventories throughout 34 years, has indicated the existence of 4,979 silver jewels and a variety of other silver objects amounting to 15,977 pieces (Porro and Barbero 1994). Total figures are impressive, though most objects were small. There were buckles, buttons, spoons, forks and knives; however, 90% of the owners had only pieces of little value and minimum weight (Figure 16).

Since 1810, when the independence revolutions were under way, Buenos Aires was a fully European-like market, with almost nonexistent differences in its material culture from any other English colony, including a stronger presence of European products. As an example, during those years ships with merchandise arrived from Russia, Denmark, Holland, Bremen, Sweden, and Hamburg (Kellenbenz 1966), and to this list we must add those coming from the United States that traded mostly flour, and the many other seal hunters that navigated the southernmost islands of the continent (Figure 17). By 1643, the city housed 16% foreigners, a percentage that dropped in the following century. The 1804 census indicates foreigners amounted to 475 people, including 250

Figure 16. The riverside around 1880: the slope disappeared to be replaced by avenues with groves; the river was refilled in view of the major works of the port and is increasingly at a larger distance from people (General Archives of the Nation).

Figure 17. The port of the Riachuelo around 1875: the new "Paris of America" receiving countless European immigrants with a material culture of their own (Archives of the CAU).

Portuguese, 108 Italians, 57 French, 29 North Americans, 15 English, 8 Irish, 2 Slavs (from Russia?), and only 1 from Germany, Scotland, Bohemia, Sweden, Denmark, and Hungary. The total urban population amounted to 41,281 inhabitants, making even more significant the percentage of foreigners within the total white population in the city.

Of all imports that arrived in the city in 1825, the English consul made the following report: a 51.11% came from England, 11.5% from the United States, 12% from Brazil, mainly reexported products from Europe, and the rest corresponded to France, northern Europe, and other countries. Archaeology also indicates this reality of a clearly importer society, but it shows as well how important Spain was in relation to some products: ceramics from Triana still were a must for the tables of the porteños, as also the olive jars from Sevilla and the flower pots from Talavera, and this was true even by 1850, in spite of the strong anti-Spanish feelings that prevailed following the Independence days. Prior to the emancipation, Mariano Moreno, one of the leaders of the movement, asked himself why Spain was against free trade, considering that nine out of ten pieces of merchandise were not Spanish: "Today, he who observes with distrust any commerce with Great

Britain cannot for sure be a good Spaniard" (Levene 1927–1928:136) (Figure 18).

The census carried out in 1744 indicates the kind of activities the white vecinos were doing: 100% of the trade and the pulperías or general stores were in the hands of people born out of the city, while 95% of the commerce of country products was local; all crafts and other handiworks corresponded in a 69% to foreigners or nonlocals, such as

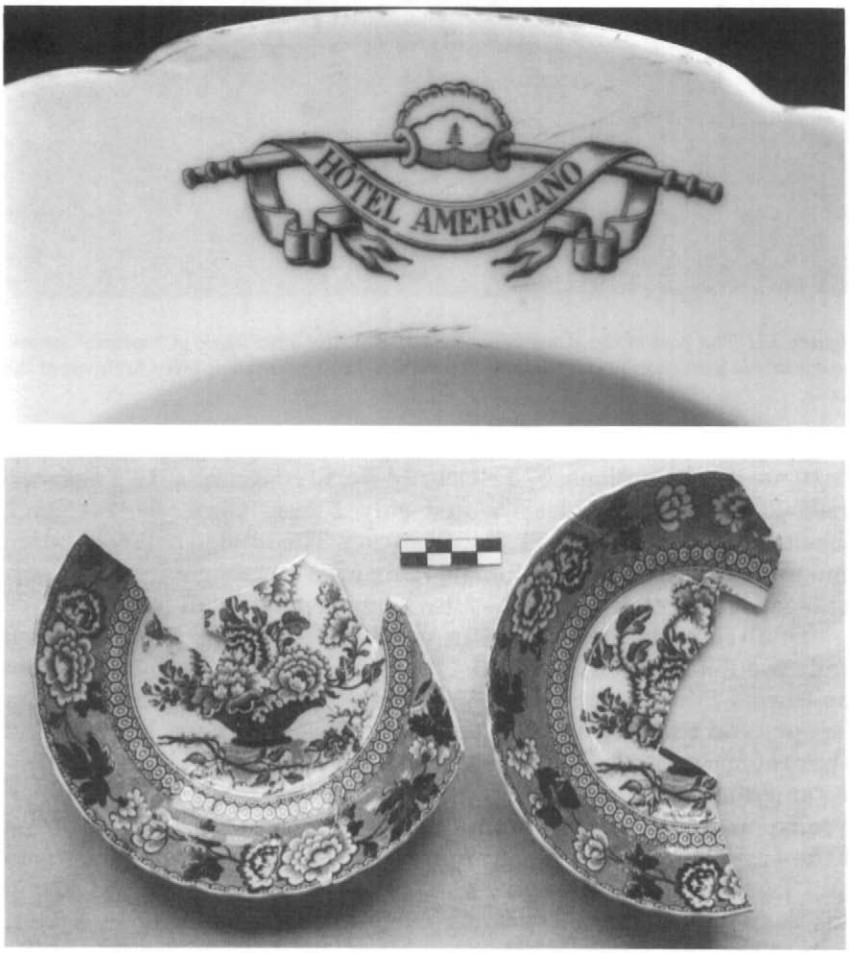


Figure 18. Novelty symbols of social status: direct or indirect references to the (above) United States (porcelain dish from the American Hotel), and (below) England (Staffordshire Pearlware dishes).

Portuguese, Spaniards, French, Scotish, and Irish. All other nonmanual works were in identical proportion in local hands: 31%, while the rest corresponded to other regions or countries (Guerín et al., 1988). Again, this indicates the important role played in the city by people born elsewhere (Figure 19).

During the eighteenth century, Buenos Aires changed noticeably, from a large village to truly a city, for that time and place. After the con-

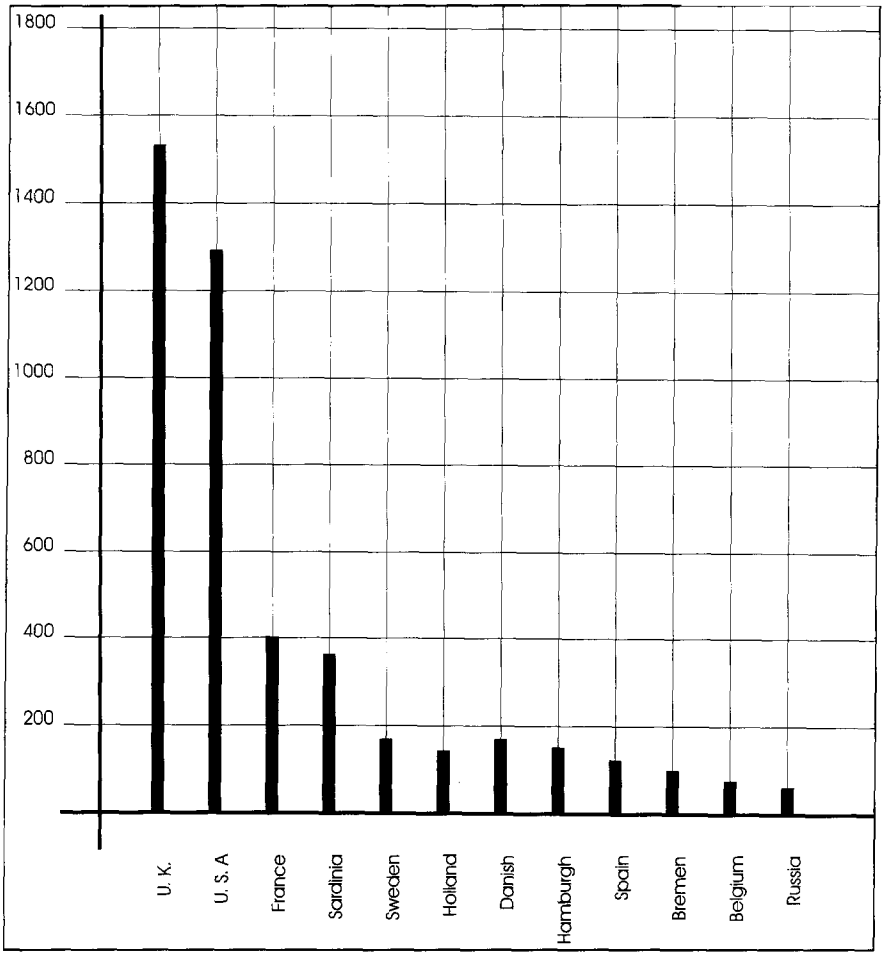


Figure 19. Place of origin of cargos arrived to Buenos Aires (1821–42) excepting the periods comprised between 1826–28 and 1838–40 and the Uruguayan and Brazilian/Portuguese frontier traffic.

struction of the fort, many other public buildings were constructed, such as the cabildo in 1729, the Teatro de La Ranchería in 1782, the Consulate in 1790, the Recova in 1803 and the cathedral, which was built and repaired several times. Many impressive churches and convents were also built, such as Santo Domingo, San Ignacio, San Francisco, and La Merced. The 22,000 inhabitants the city housed in 1770 had grown to 40,000 in 1800. By the beginnings of the decade of the 1820s, the city and its immediate surroundings had 260 stores and 500 pulperías, giving shape to a trade center that would consolidate with time until the twentieth century. Also, during the eighteenth century the first urban project was completed with the Alameda, a large promenade in front of the river for the entertainment of the new bourgeoisie. Simultaneously, the first neighborhoods were defined, taking as a starting point the parishes and military barracks that divided the city. These helped to agglutinate the population in coherent groups easy to identify, a good part of which still give shape to the system of neighborhoods (Figure 20).

Figure 20. A poor European immigrant inaugurating a new door-to-door sales system: he would sell a variety of objects including kitchenware, socks and stockings, and mates manufactured in the region (General Archives of the Nation).

As to politics, the most important changes took place after 1810 with the beginning of the process of Independence and the related wars. This book is not the place to discuss such a complicated process of generation, development, and its further consequences, but it can be understood as a part of the process we have seen up to now: Lima or Potosí no longer were the main centers in South America, and Buenos Aires had taken their place. The economic situation as also the correlation of power had reverted: both cities were relegated within the new regional structure and the trade system; roads were collapsing and so were those territories that up until then had been so important. The end of the economic market in Paraguay, due to the expulsion of the Jesuit order and the Independence Wars, also contributed to breaking the close relationship that once existed between Buenos Aires and the region of the old Jesuitic missions, helping to reorient the port economy. Up to the middle of that century, the country would suffer the upheavals of the collapsing system, a number of different wars, the division of huge territories—Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia—and the reorientation of the export economy toward Buenos Aires.

A *PARIS* IN THE AMERICAS (1810–1880)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Buenos Aires experienced an accelerated growth. The downtown area became more densely populated and the price of lots suddenly went up; as a consequence, precarious and poor households had to be moved elsewhere. Lots in turn were further subdivided until one-eighth of a solar was established as the most typical dimension. Toward the borders, the city spread further following the directions of the original streets, with the exception of a few locations wherein breaches, because of the preexisting topography, could not be straightened. The process of block rectification was stricter each day, as also the homogenization of facades and corners that were to be carried out. Slowly, the heterogeneity of the architectural and urban lots so typical of the eighteenth century was being lost: by 1820, the extension of the city's hinterland toward the Río Salado doubled and following a number of ups and downs, the territory was finally secured with the military campaign of Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1833. The old square pattern so deeply rooted in Buenos Aires was used as the starting point for the trazado of all the new villages that were being created in the surrounding area each time the frontier with the Aborigines was pushed farther back. There, new rural establishments or *estancias* started to operate under the traditional latifundist system, with a subsequent remarkable increase of sheep herds.

The forts built in these different frontiers would later become the capital cities of provincial district; often, cities would develop within these estancias. These new realities brought about a change in the social structure of suburban and rural inhabitants, polarized between those who adapted to working for a wage, and others who intended to defend a margin of individual freedom, a position that had by then turned almost incompatible with the prevailing system of agriculture and cattleraising.

The impact of European immigration would begin to be noticed since the decade of the 1830s, and after 1850 it was very strongly felt. Foreigners no longer were an active minority; by then they were a part of all and every social stratus, adding to the heterogeneity of the population (Figures 20 and 21). Simultaneously, the number of Afro-Argentines drastically decreased after they were granted freedom, as a consequence of their massive participation in internal and external wars, the end of international trafficking, the high mortality rate caused by epidemics, and the racial blend. Aborigines were each day farther from the city, and they ended up being considered like some curiosity by the white culture that was definitely in control of the city. Architecture dramatically reflected all these changes: differences in the ways of habiting intensified between the grand residences, medium-class households, and the conventillos that were seen after 1860. These tenement houses were mere square rooms built along narrow patios, each unit being rented to a different family, so that twenty families lived in the same space that in colonial times was occupied by only one family, The system of the late eighteenth century that consisted of minimum households all lined up in front of the sidewalk became obsolete, due mainly to the price of lots and to the fact that, actually, no use was made of the backyards. The new conventillos would house over two hundred people, mostly immigrants from varied origins, in a same building (Scobie 1977). The new colonial neighborhoods that were created at a certain distance from the central area grew stronger each day, and after 1870, public transportation made it even easier to live in the suburbs. Flores and Belgrano were not too far and by 1880, with the new trazado of Buenos Aires, they were transformed into neighborhoods, enclosed within the capital city (Figure 21).

At the time, architecture was the most precise indicator of urban change: since the 1820s after the Independence Wars had come to an end, the construction of great buildings was reinitiated. Some examples of this rebirth would be featured by the first non-Catholic Christian churches (Anglican, Evangelical, and Presbyterian), the Catholic churches of Balvanera and La Concepción, the first hotels, the

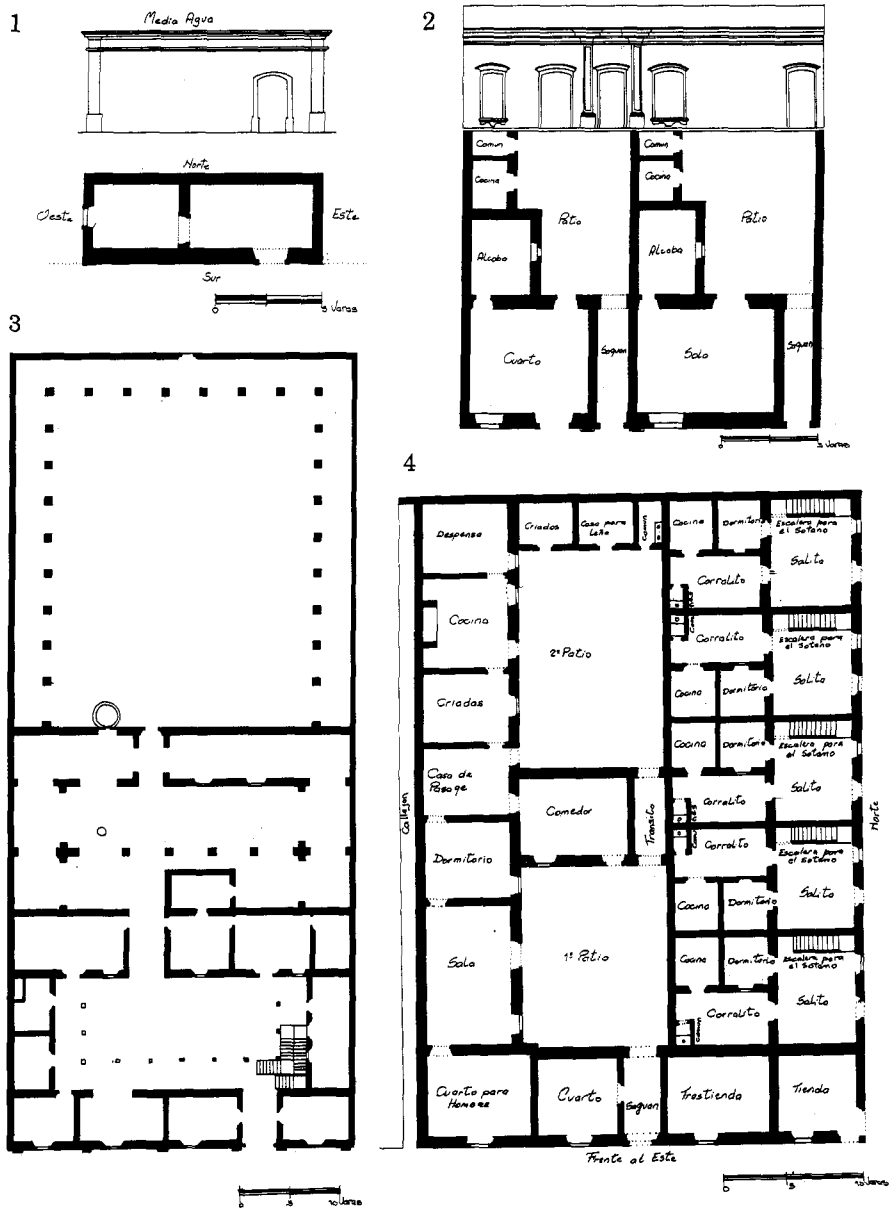


Figure 21. Four types of homes in plans drawn between 1784 and 1792: (1) minimum, two-room house in the old urban tradition; (2) two tiny twin houses with a common front; (3) grand residency with three patios, and (4) a two-patio house by which the owner built a strip of five minimum houses for rent, and a store at the corner (General Archives of the Nation).

Hospicio de la Convalescencia, theaters such as the grand Teatro Colón, hospitals, marketplaces, and asylums. In 1856, the construction of buildings that were to be used specifically as schools was under way, and shortly after, banks, a few universities, and the Penitenciaría Nacional followed (Figure 22). By the 1880s, the city was already organized with a system of clearly established barrios or neighborhoods, each with hospitals, schools, military barracks, train stations, marketplaces, and churches of their own. During that decade, the first private palaces were built, huge mansions in the northern area, a section of the city occupied only by families with a very high purchase capacity. Some of them were luxury residencies designed and built in Europe and brought to Buenos Aires in pieces. Increasingly, fortunes created with agriculture and cattleraising were reflected in the households of a selected minority that led a life of unlimited comforts and luxuries. The Europeanization process of the medium and upper classes grew stronger not only due to the physical transplant of hundreds of thousands immigrants into Argentina, but also through the introduction of new lifestyles. At this point, Buenos Aires was widely known as "the Paris of America." After 1880, people that promenaded in residential neighborhoods, in the downtown area, and even in neighborhoods of the middle class, would easily live the illusion of being in Paris; however, those who would peek into the conventillos or other places of the urban borders, would be rudely struck by reality.

In the nineteenth century, parks and plazas played the part of important linkings of urban space. After the construction of the Alameda in the eighteenth century, the Caserón de Rosas would be built in the following century, with very extended parks and no restricted areas to the public, a zoo, and a botanical garden. Bitterly criticized by his enemies, and following the 1852 political upheavals and battles that caused Rosas's defeat and his separation from power, the issue would be discussed even more heartily: additional spaces for the leisure and recreation of the new bourgeoisie were to be created everywhere in the city. These places were built by the late nineteenth century and constitute most of the open spaces in Buenos Aires. The difference between those parks and the simple *empty* spaces of the colonial Plaza Mayor, lies not only in their decoration and design but also in the ways these spaces were used, as they no longer were marketplaces or wagon stops, but places citizens would use for their leisure and entertainment. Activities formerly carried out there, together with the slaughter houses, factories, warehouses, cattle corrals, and in general all buildings connected with industry, were gradually moved away from the central area and often became generators of new neighborhoods. The downtown area

Figure 22. Commodities consumed according to ethnic preferences: (above, left) the "Bitter des Basques" imported from Spain for the Basque local community; (above, right) label of a bottle rebuilt out of one hundred fragments; (below) publicity and sales stand built with bottles in 1899 to celebrate the turn of the century (Archives of the CAU).

would house public administration, commercial activities, and private residencies. Following the yellow fever epidemic that occurred in 1871, the city would split into one downtown and two clearly determined zones: north and south, which were occupied by the rich and the poor, respectively.

Buenos Aires, since 1850, would be a city of foreigners: immigration encouraged by the state experienced an intensive, unequaled growth in the continent, except for the immigrational movements in the United States: by 1870,24% of the population was of Italian origin and 8% of people of Spanish origin. The city displayed a multiethnic diversity very different from the former one: Germans, Russians, Polish, English, Irish, Arabs, and Jews from throughout eastern Europe would live and work together, sharing their differences and similarities (Figure 40, p. 125).

The main issue throughout the nineteenth century was related to the creation of an adequate structure for public services such as running waters, sewers, and storm water sewers, and later, electricity, gas, and telephones. The poor quality of the water supply had caused the dreadful epidemics of cholera and yellow fever, and this serious problem would not be solved until important English companies were hired and charged with the completion of the works the city so badly needed. This gigantic intervention initiated in the 1880s left its mark in the subsoil of the city, and archaeological evidence of these works is often reported: pipe systems in the streets and below houses and buildings, some with several additional superimpositions. Before this, city authorities had tried almost everything: around 1865 it was the tubing of the Terceros, the streams that run across Buenos Aires, and before that, in the 1820s, the installation of pumps and tanks for home water distribution. Meanwhile, the old colonial system of obtaining drinkable water from the *aguateros* or water carriers who extracted it from the river was still in use; also, the population obtained nondrinkable water from wells excavated in the patios of their households. Wealthy people and religious orders enjoyed the benefit of having huge *aljibes* with underground cisterns in which fresh and clean rain water accumulated. Many of these underground chambers have been duly excavated for the purpose of achieving a better understanding of the complexities of this old water supply system.

The downtown area went on agglutinating administrative activities, both public and private, making it definite that residential areas were to occupy the south or the north of the city. Nonetheless, and from different points of view, it was a city with a temporary character: numerous households built with corrugated sheets or timber, as also cab-

ins, constructed with no professional assistance whatsoever, were seen by the thousands (Liernur and Silvestri 1993). Increasingly, Buenos Aires was a city of immigrants in which 70% of the people occupying the central area, by 1869, were foreigners; when adding the percentage corresponding to their children, the figure climbs to 90%. The old colonial village was but a memory that would occasionally emerge with certain cultural patterns and the old, big colonial houses turned into conventillos.

Just as both the architecture and the city suffered a sudden change, everyday life also changed in terms of family and work, to such a degree that past habits were almost swept away. Since the early nineteenth century things would change in domestic life, influenced by the new European fashions derived first from the Enlightment and later from the Industrial Revolution and still later from the new bourgeoisie. Interestingly, and considering how far Buenos Aires was from the empire, many of these ideas and habits would either arrive at the same time, or would eventually become superimposed. The table manners are a good example of this: the use of a flat dish and a fork began to be popular during the late eighteenth century, in wealthy families, together with the new table sets made of Creamwares and mayolicas from Triana, as well as the habit of using one glass per person and individual eating utensils. However, such habits would only become popular by the nineteenth century, assimilated by the porteños as an English influence. On the contrary, the use of a fireplace—an English influence—was already common by 1810–20, together with the Spanish, and in general, European, tertulias. All of this has been understood as an overall phenomenon of change. Insignificant and major circumstances, including the use of industrially manufactured buttons and the idea of disposing of glass bottles, are a part of the same remarkable transformation that took place in only two generations' time. The Independence, the liberation of slaves, and the massive arrival of products resulting from the Industrial Revolution, together with the destruction of the old regional economic system, are also a part of the same intricate phenomenon.

According to archaeological evidence, those changes have not taken place violently but, instead, very quickly: at least in regard to table settings and everyday objects, people had options, inasmuch as the market was offering simultaneously "the old" and "the new." The garbage remains of a family with a major purchase capacity—located at Alsina 455 Street—proved to include an identical amount of mayolica and Creamware table services; at Balcarce 433, cheap El Morro earthenware was recovered, in correspondence to a site that was being

used by construction workers; and still, at San Lorenzo 392, a site corresponding to a rising family, only Creamwares and Pearlwares were found. So, it was not simply a matter of being rich or poor; people had the chance to choose from a large variety of prices, models, materials, and designs (Figure 14).

As to manual works, things changed both in the way of working and the tools used: machines and iron objects manufactured in Germany and England were easily available; there were also new needs on the side of the bourgeoisie, and new luxuries that aristocracy demanded. The massive immigration from Europe was another issue to take into consideration.

From the midnineteenth century, Buenos Aires turned into a city of immigrants; by the turn of that century, 50% of the total city population were foreigners, a figure that later increased. The old city with a port and one-story buildings started to fade, to be replaced by provisional constructions first, and later by the new European architectural styles. Thus, Indians begun to be considered rare, exotic, and almost evil beings; Africans would massively join the armies of the Independence and other subsequent wars, blending with different social groups and also dying by the thousands during the dreadful epidemics of 1860. So, the new society appeared to be artificially white—as it included Eastern and Western Europeans, Arabs, Armenians, Russians, and Jews—though there were no Africans or Orientals whatsoever. For a while, the dream of the upper social classes had come true; in any case, by the end of the century people became aware of the fact that Buenos Aires, in spite of its white population, was not and would never be Paris. Streets and buildings could look the same, architects and urbanists involved in the expansion of the city would be French, people could well imitate the European manners, and the upper social classes could display an impeccable education, but Buenos Aires, however, would never be Pans (Figure 18).

3 Archaeology of the Downtown

THE CONI PRESS (PERÚ 680): CHANGES IN A LOT AT THE URBAN BORDER

The inside of the building that housed, as its last destiny, the famous Coni Press was archaeologically excavated (Figure 2). This large structure, which was the headquarters of one of the most important publishing houses in the history of Argentina, was in a remarkable state of preservation. It stood at a place where the Tercero del Sur used to run, thus making it even more interesting for studying the process of utilization of the lot and the contents of the different layers of refills deposited from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This helped to improve our knowledge on how the original topography gradually disappeared, observing at the same time the different changes that occurred in the use of the urban space (Schávelzon 1994; 1996a).

The oldest evidences are represented by a series of three aligned holes that held three wooden pillars or logs placed at a distance of one and a half meters, respectively, parallel to the sidewalk. The holes were below a foundation we have dated around 1740, and considering the ceramic artifacts found inside, the date established for the pillar holes is approximately 1650. Even though at the moment of the discovery we lacked elements to provide an accurate interpretation (Schávelzon 1996a:41) beyond the fact that they were post holes, when revising the 1734 census of the city, we learned that by then, shelters made of hides were still in use. The Pampa Indians built these shelters with skins, mostly from horses. The shelters were long and narrow, supported by two rows of parallel logs firmly buried in the ground, and closed with skins on three of the sides and the top. Father Sáchez Labrador gave the following description:

> [T]hey are nothing but large tents or *toldos,* high, square shaped and a little bent in the middle. For the roof they sew twenty six horse skins . . . and threads used were the nerves and veins of the same horses. Similarly, they fix other pieces as lateral overhangings, leaving two open spaces as doors. . . . These *toldos* are supported with thin logs, nailed and secured all around with pickets. (Furlong 1938:49).

This represents the earliest evidence of a construction in that place, but at the back of the lot near the bed of the old Tercero, early seventeenth-century ceramics were recovered, of the types known as Orange Micaceous, Green Lebrillo, Columbia Plain, and Isabela, in a context that yielded also horse and cow bones and two stones to grind corn, of Indian tradition. This would imply that in that area the terrain had been transitorily used, if only for taking the meals and for waste disposal.

By 1740 the first household was built in the place by Juan Gutiérrez Villegas and Juana Rodríguez, who made no legal inscription of the property. This house was built when the cabildo began to sell lots from the nearby ejido, causing an increase of population in the area. According to some historic documents, the house included a living room, two bedrooms, and a kitchen. Walls were made with adobe and foundations with brick. Records show than in 1800 the property was sold to a pardo, following a long trial between a son-in-law of the owners and Juana Rodríguez. The latter was finally compelled to pay the dragoon lieutenant with a black female slave and her daughter, to equal the price of the house, which had been estimated at 600 pesos. As said, in 1800 the property changed owners, and this pardo kept the house until 1822, when it was sold to the Goyena family for the amount of 1,000 pesos (Figure 22).

Thus, the property had been in the ownership of a low rank military and a mestizo; it was badly located, near the Tercero, which caused air pollution and frequent floods. However, the increasing urban density and the new structures built in that area where the new and fashionable neighborhood of San Telmo was being developed, particularly because of the construction of the church and convent of the Jesuits, made those properties and lots very attractive for wealthy families with some vision. The Goyenas decided to buy and then demolish the old house and to build a much bigger residence, an enterprise that seemed logical considering the advantages of a location on the Calle Real, disregarding the inconveniences caused by the Tercero. The Tercero was partly refilled and leveled with the demolition materials, while the complete process of refilling and sedimentation came to an end only a half-century later (Figures 23 and 37 [p. 114]).

The new residence had seventeen chambers. *Azaguán* led the way to the main patio; next, there was a second patio surrounded by the different bedrooms, and a third bedroom at the back for the servants' quarters. The first patio had an *aljibe,* or water well, and a gallery with brick floors, indicating that the living room and the other spaces comprised therein were the most important ones in the house. At the back,

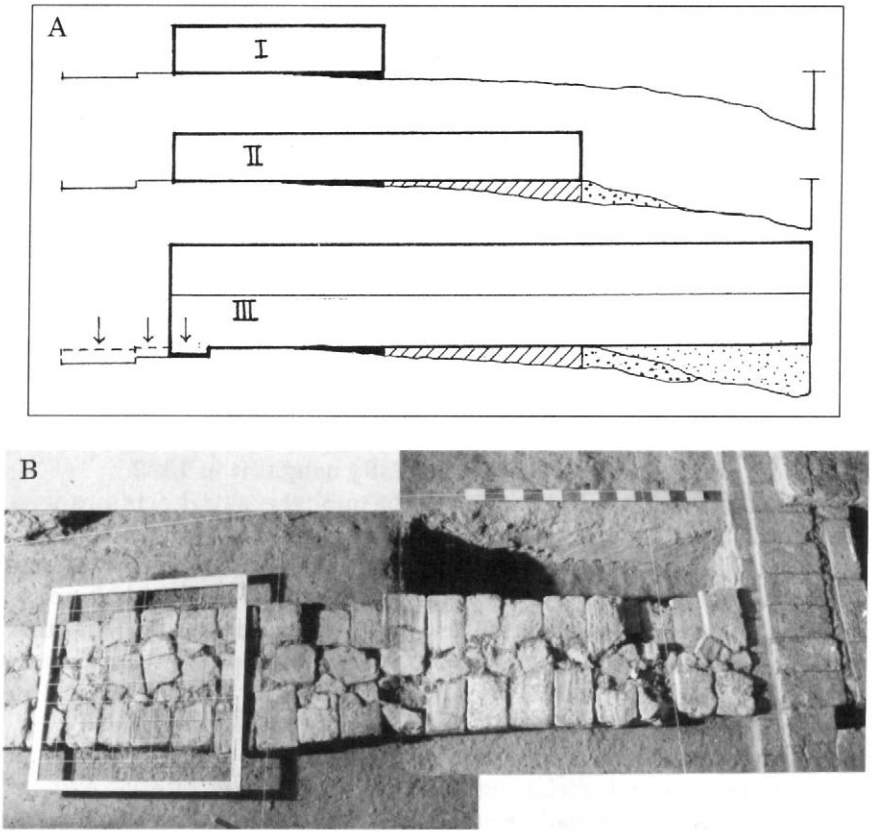


Figure 23. Excavations at the Coni Press: (A) transformation process to have the lot leveled: (I) Rodriguez House around 1750; (II) Goyena House in 1822, and (III) Coni Press in 1884; they all used the remains of the former demolition to refill the backyard and (B) a view of the older foundation of the Rodríguez House reused in the more modern buildings.

refills appear to have been unsufficient, so original topography was not fully lost. The residence was totally made of brick and so were the floors, and at least one foundation of the old house was preserved, while adobe walls were torn down to further elevate the ground level (Figure 23b).

With this house, the new early nineteenth century architecture was being clearly defined. As an inheritance of a few large households from the former century that also showed a sequence of patios, these were narrower and adapted to the new lots of only one-quarter—at times, of only one-eighth—of the surface of the original ones extending

along the partition wall, with the living room at the front and a door leading to the main patio. In the middle of this patio there was an aljibe, which was much more than a simple water well; it was an underground construction with plastered walls where rain water accumulated from the terraces and patios by means of pipes and sewers. Having an aljibe was a symbol of high social status because the cost of one was high.

This change from the small original house to the new residence indicates the major modifications the entire area was undergoing. However, the Goyena family would not stay there for long: almost all important families, including the Goyenas, were forced to abandon the district as a consequence of two devastating epidemics: cholera in 1867 and yellow fever in 1871. Those who could afford it moved north in the city. The Goyenas sold the property in 1873, and after a long series of different owners, Pablo Emilio Coni finally bought it in 1883.

The Conis were a French family of publishers and printers who had been attending business at other printing offices located elsewhere in the city. In 1886, when Pedro Coni graduated as an engineer and after demolishing the former Goyena residency, he initiated the construction of a new and larger building to house the company. This time the structure was meant to be an industrial plant that would also have a rental house, which was a total novelty, and another one where the publisher himself would live. The mixed or double use of buildings, both as households and factories, had been quite common in the early times of the new industrial architecture; but in the country, experiences in this field were rather scarce. In this case mixed systems were incorporated, by means of new technologies and materials such as steel, pillars without walls, or the novelty of a patio with glass roofing, together with the traditional system of supporting walls. In 1975, this remarkable building was still being used as a press, meaning that ninety years after it was built, it was still fit to operate as in the past.

Even though the Goyena house was torn down, Coni left the brick floors untouched and well preserved under the new ones; he used cement for the area that would house the industrial plant, and parquet for the offices. Similarly, he saved several old foundations for the new walls and a number of old sewers that he had used for the first water system. The old aljibe was also preserved, and the definite refilling of the Tercero was completed with the demolition materials (Figure 24).

During the excavations conducted in these building, artifacts recovered proved representative of both the activities carried out there and of the residents. In the Rodriguez house, 12% of the ceramics found were of Indian tradition; 7.84% corresponded to large earthen criollo

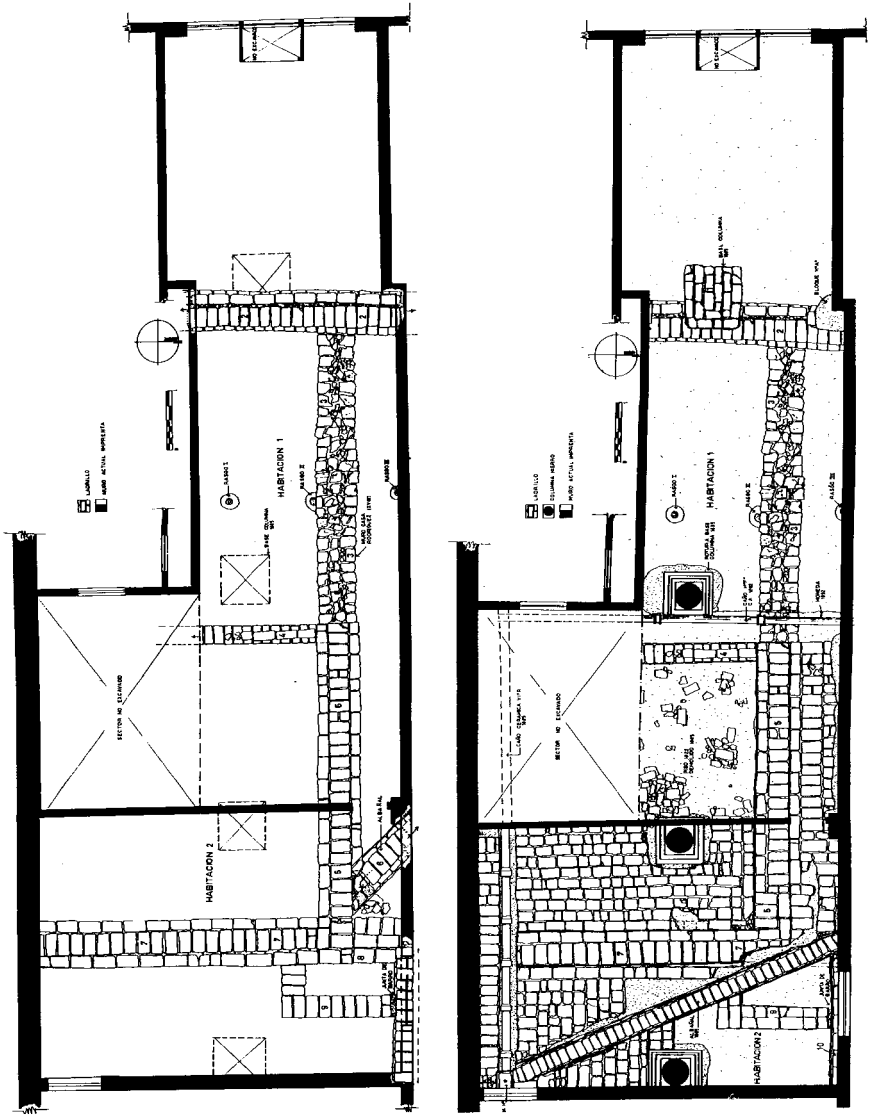


Figure 24. Plans of the excavation: a portion of the building at the Coni Press. Above, the foundations from 1750 and 1822 on top of three log marks left by an Indian tent. Below, the aggregates built in 1884 for the Coni Press.

jars, and the remaining fragments to European objects, such as Creamware, olive jars or botijas from Sevilla, Spanish mayolica from Triana, and a couple of crystal glasses and other glass artifacts, including English wine bottles and perfume flasks. We may assume this was a lower-class family because about 20% of their tableware was of local manufacture. It appeared they wanted to give an image of wealth and comforts that had nothing to do with the poor quality of their home. This is a good expression of the remarkable social changes that were taking place in the new century, featured by the anxiety of some groups to entertain often and have parties, pretending they enjoyed a position of wealth that in fact was more of a show than a reflection of reality.

A few years later, the Goyena house had a number of characteristics that were considered, in those times, almost luxurious: imported Pas-de-Calais tiles, windows with glasses, brick floors, and an aljibe with drinkable water, not to mention the impressive dimensions of the building. As to the architectural design, it was as well an example of a particular moment: it had a large living room, while dining rooms would be defined much later as such, becoming a common space in households and separating the two first patios (Lecuona 1984). Material culture was represented by porcelains, Pearlware, and White Refined Earthenwares, glass fragments from bottles of wine, perfumes, and other flasks, toys for children, a crucifix, toothbrushes, bone buckles for belts, keys, padlocks, pipes, buttons, and horseshoes. All of this can be easily distinguished from objects recovered in the context of the printing office, which consisted in working tools, construction materials, and particular types of wood and metal from the press.

This case is evidence of the quick and profound modifications suffered by the property and of the use of urban grounds throughout at least two centuries, as also of the fast social changes that are so clearly reflected both in architecture and in material culture at the borders of the city.

1865, AN URBAN PROJECT: THE TUNNEL FOR THE TERCERO DEL SUR (DEFENSA 751).

Similar to the case described above, this lot was also located at the banks of the Tercero del Sur, an inadequate place for a house (Figures 2, 25, and 26). Even though it was just at the border of the city, it was a part of the area that remained partly unoccupied until the eighteenth century, Two households of minimum dimensions appeared there; the first, built around 1739, was at the front, and the second and older one,

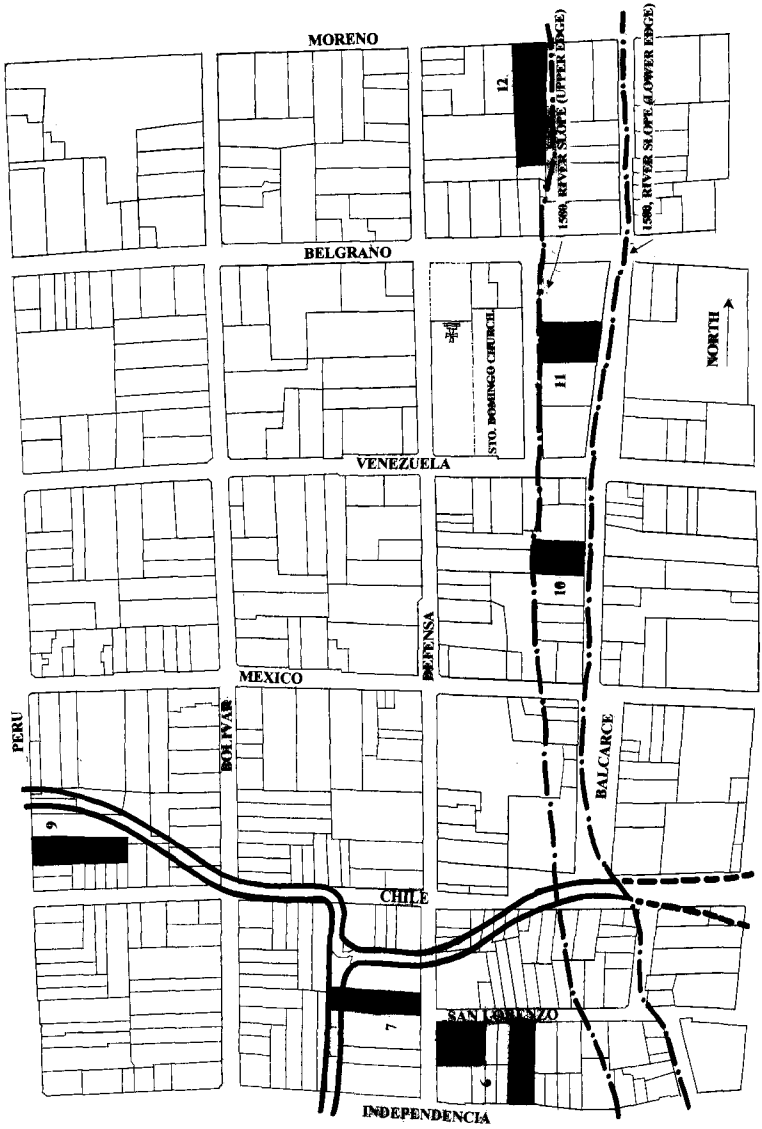


Figure 25. Sector under survey: a plan of 1886 showing the lots excavated and the design of the Tercero del Sur rivulet when it was tubed. For further identification of each building see Figure 3. The slope and the coast of the river had already disappeared, while the design is coincident with the upper part of the small blocks at the lower section of the plan. (Redrawn from Catastro Calaza, 1886)

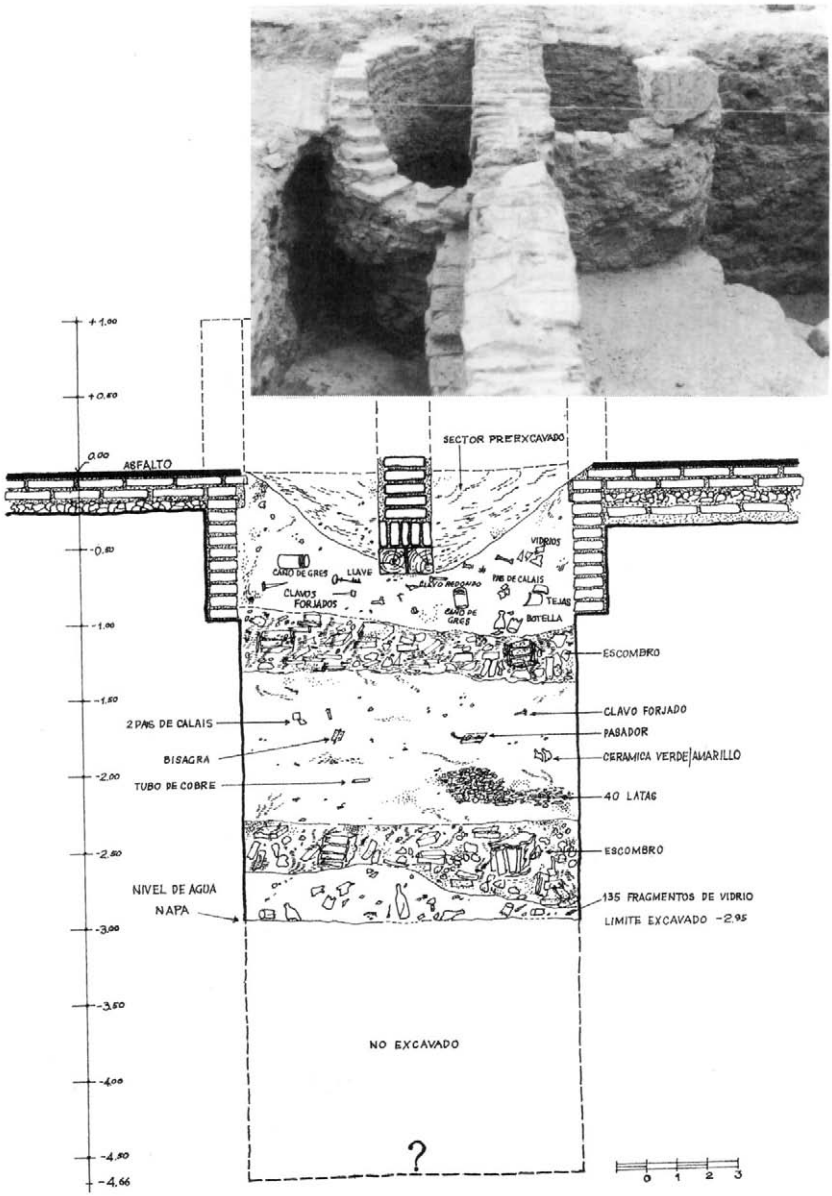


Figure 26. Water pit excavated at 751 Defensa Street as an example of a complex work with a double access: from one interior and one exterior at the same time in a private residency, opened in 1865 and sealed in 1894. The limit of the excavation was defined by the level of the water table. The photo shows the pit after the excavation.

at the back, corresponds to the 1730s. Both houses were inhabited until 1860, when the entire area suffered an important urban renewal: the government decided to tube the Tercero along most of its course to improve living conditions in the area, thus facilitating the sale of those lots and encouraging new neighbors to build better residences.

In the past, a number of viceroys had also considered the Tercero to be a serious dilemma because the mere actions of throwing garbage and dirt into the stream were not enough to solve the flooding problem. In no time water would again fill the ditch, which constituted the natural drainage of the south section of the city whenever it rained. Thus, only a hydraulics engineering project could serve the double purpose of receiving the waters and draining them out, without causing inconveniences to the neighbors. On the other hand, if such a project could

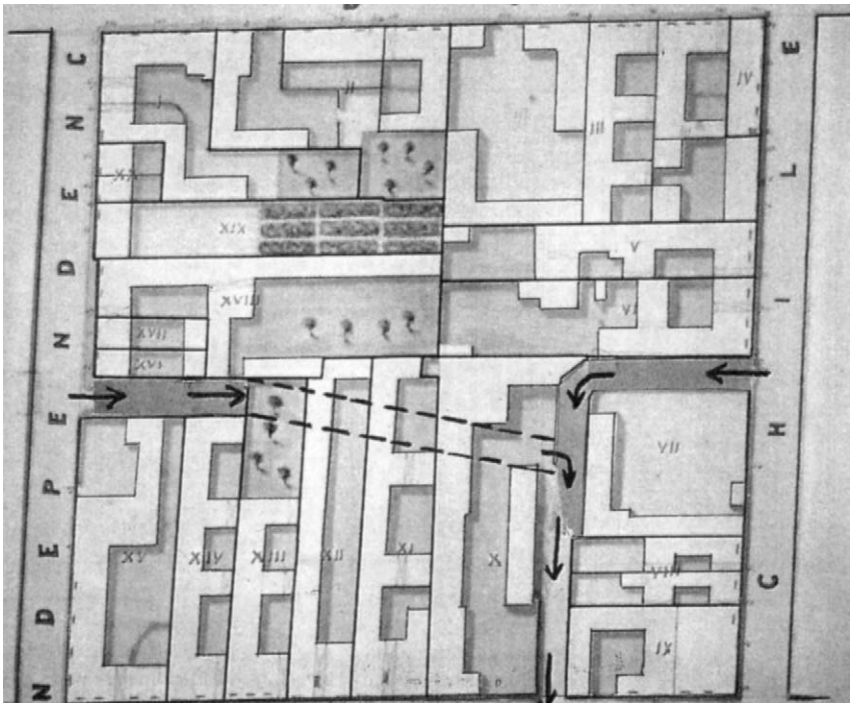


Figure 27. Plan of a typical block in Buenos Aires, 1865, from the *Catastro Beare.* The subdivision of lots is increasingly narrower; house number XI located at 751 Defensa Street, is the one that has been excavated. The tubing of one of the branches of the stream, which already runs under several houses, can be observed.

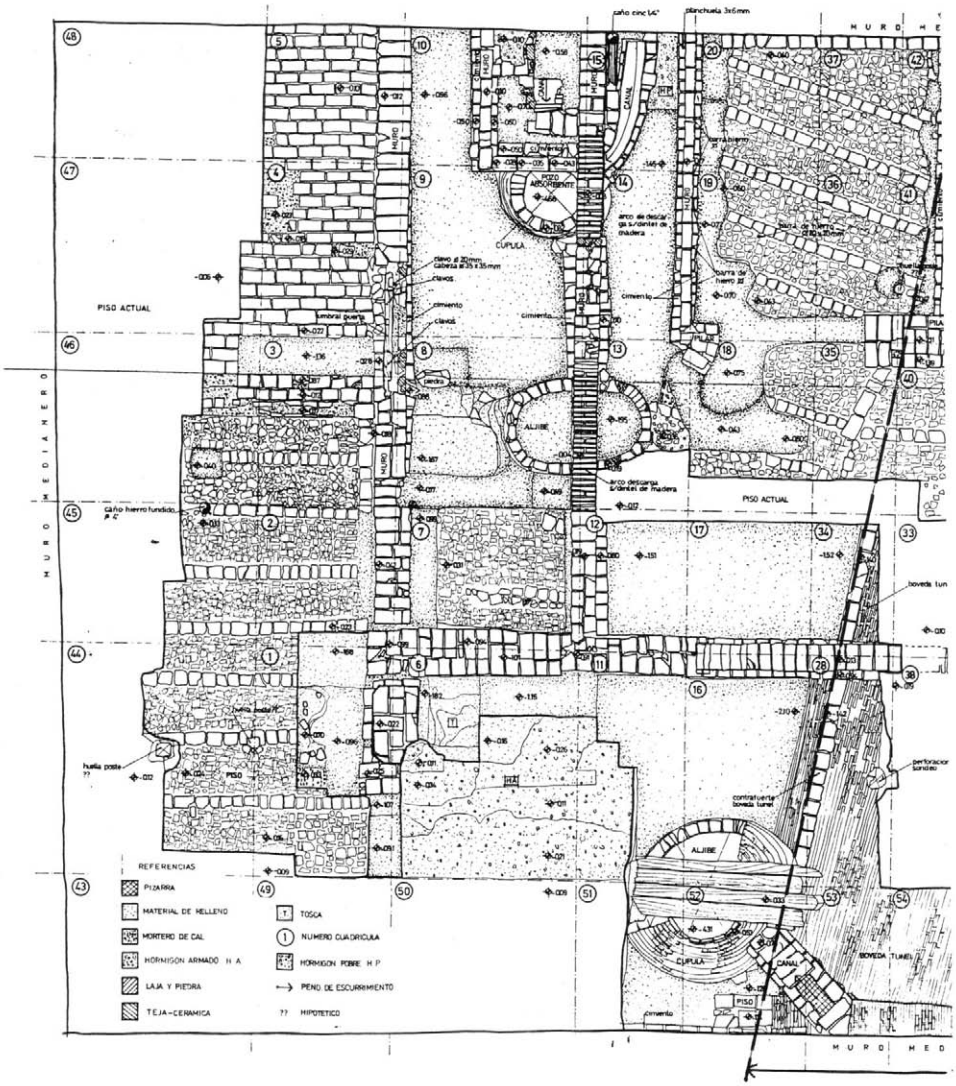
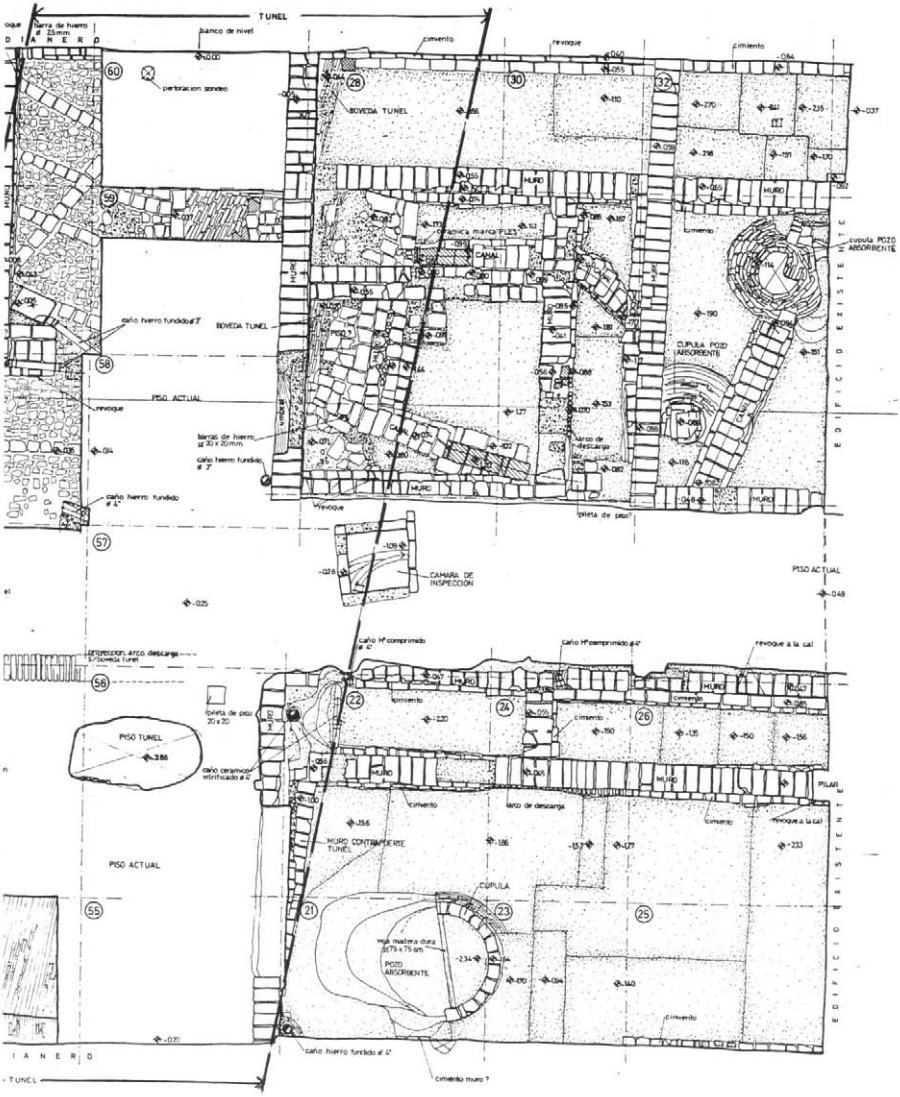


Figure 28. Plan of the excavations accomplished in one sector of 751 Defensa Street, and the tunnel of the Tercero del Sur stream already tubed: a good example showing the

be carried out, prices of the lots would go up, as their location around the Calle Mayor made them very attractive. The history of the problems the municipality had to overcome to complete this tubing is extensive, with the project extending several years. Finally, the project



changes in architecture that occurred in less than one century. Below this layer there were other eighteenth-century constructions.

was completed by Mayor Torcuato de Alvear, a man who promoted other remarkable public works all over the city. Tubing the Tercero was only one of the many transformations in the physical environs that were initiated before his administration, and probably the most

difficult project ever carried out up until then. The solution came by opening an underground channel covered with a brick vault, the upper section of which was at ground level. These vaults were built lot by lot, and each owner thereafter would build his residence on top of them. Because of those works, the two small households mentioned before ended up at a lower level than that of the new terrain, and so they were simply torn down; in their place, a very large residence with twenty-five chambers and three patios was built, the most important structure we have had the opportunity to excavate in the entire city. This system allowed rain waters to run under the new constructions. The works could only be completed after 1880, and the first action taken to that effect was the tubing of the Tercero under Independencia Street and under a few other lots in that same block and in the block to the east. When observing the Catastro Beare in the period between 1860 and 1864, it becomes apparent that a portion of the *Zanjón* was left in the open (Figure 27).

The whole extension of this tubing, including the master branch that drained into the river, together with two additional major sections, would be in use for only twenty years. Subsequently, it would be shut off and refilled. The 1867 cholera epidemic forced city authorities to organize an efficient system for the provision of drinking water and for the evacuation of sewage and rain water. This system was implemented by English engineer John Bateman; it covered the entire extension of the city and was completely independent from all former undertakings in use, including the tubing of the Tercero, which was shut off for good in 1892. Portions of the Tercero that were originally left open had been eventually refilled, as was the case with the portion near the Coni Press described earlier. From that time on, the history of the Tercero was cast into oblivion. As time passed, an occasional finding would take place in the undergrounds of the area, allowing the memory of a network of mistery tunnels running along the subsoil of the city to remain alive.

Excavations in this lot proved useful to establish the complete cultural sequence, from the use made of the lots prior to any permanent occupation, to the construction, around 1730, of the first household near Defensa Street (Figure 28). This house was small, measuring 4 meters wide and 8 meters long, and was situated in the middle of the lot. The walls were not parallel, showing that the quality of the building was poor, and floors were made with brick fragments. From this site excavators recovered an ensemble of objects, which included about one hundred English and French clay pipes and an important amount of Indian tradition ceramic, corresponding to the Monocromo Rojo Earthenwares

(Figure 9c) type (Figure 29). The tunnel of 1865 was also discovered, together with the old sanitary system of the house that was in use prior to the new developments incorporated by Obras Sanitarias. These old installations consisted of two aljibes with the corresponding reservoirs, a water well, and four sewers. There were a large number of objects at the outside of the tunnel's vault, in a refill with cultural materials from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. A garbage pit yielded a ceramic group of several hundred samples of Whiteware and ceramics dated between 1865 and 1895, while complementary excavations carried out in the inside of the structure, gradually allowed an understanding of the changes introduced in the building during the twentieth century. History says it was used as a household from the time it was built until 1895, that is to say, about thirty years, and it later became a winery, then a car repair station, and finally a conventillo or tenement house. Cultural materials present in this excavation constitute perhaps the most complete sampling ever recovered in Buenos Aires because the

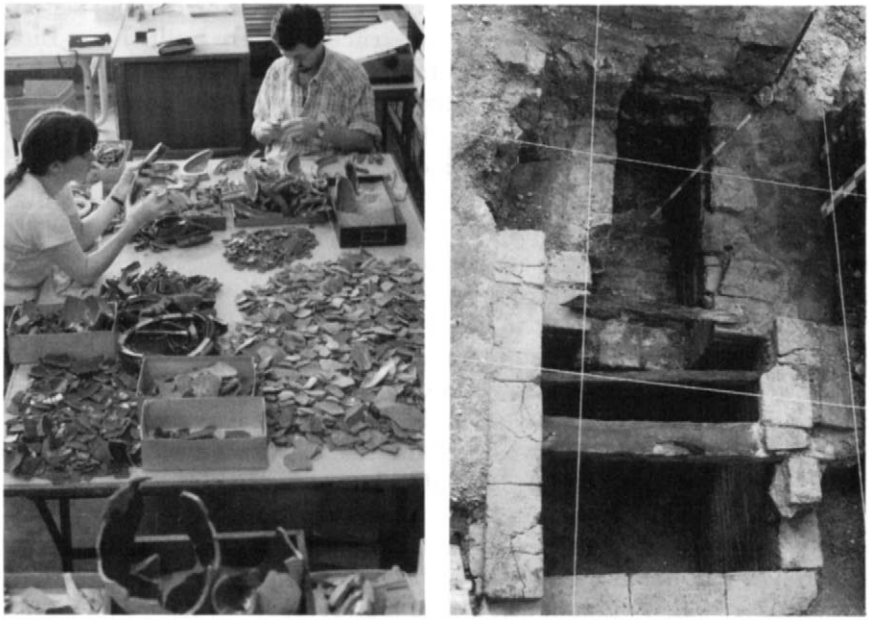


Figure 29. Urban garbage in the first half of the nineteenth century: (left) several thousand El Morro ceramics used by construction workers who built the Huergo Warehouses, the garbage pit (right) of an aristocratic residency, at 455 Alsina street; only Creamwares were found in it.

tunnel that was excavated in the bed of the Tercero at this location, held most of the garbage thrown there throughout three centuries. This group was used as a starting point for many other surveys related to cultural material studies in the city (Schávelzon 1986; 1991).

THE ELÍA HOUSE: CHANGES IN TYPOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY (BALCARCE 531)

At Balcarce Street there is a building that tradition attributes to the Elía family, though research has shown that in fact, that family never lived there (Figures 2 and 25). The structure stands in the upper section of the old riverside slope, and this makes it an especially interesting case because it allows us to understand how one of the most significant urban spaces was gradually transformed, until the nature of it could no longer be recognized (de Martino, Gómez and Lazzari 1988).

The riverside slope, since the distribution of lots by Garay, had remained a part of the community lands; only in the eighteenth century, the blocks comprised between Balcarce and Paseo Colón Streets began to take shape, and with time, new constructions were built there. But the slope was a physical limitation in itself, so buildings could only be placed in the upper section. This has been an interesting case because it has given us the chance to observe how the construction gradually invaded the slope, and how this household changed from a building of minimum dimensions into a residency and later into a conventillo. This is a peculiar case in which physical changes and a situation of shared ownership took place at the same site.

The oldest household found was owned, in 1749, by the Marsán brothers. In the middle of the lot, they had built a timber and adobe house, consisting of two chambers with a tiled roof, a kitchen, and a water well. In 1788 the house was enhanced with new bricks and new wooden logs to support the roof, and following the new fashion of the Real Ordenanza of 1784, two additional chambers were built at the front, separated by a zaguán, placed in between. The lot had a difference in elevation of 3.10 meters between the front and the back: the old house was on top of the slope and the facade was at ground level. An impressive facade was built with an entrance, on top of which there was a vault that supported an upper belvedere with a nice sight of the river; both the belvedere and the facade were ornamented with iron fences and pillars. From the street it looked like an expensive residence, but in reality it was the old house with a few changes and the

two new chambers that were occupied by two different families. They all shared the patio, the kitchen, the water closet, and the water well.

By 1840, life in common sharing the patio must have turned difficult, because by then, two independent doors leading to the two front rooms had been opened, as also a third lateral door that led directly to the back. The ideas of private property and a daily life that developed inside households were common in those times, but things had been different in the past centuries. The process of change continued, and other chambers were added, which slowly gave shape to a house with two patios; finally, by 1900, the house came to have sixteen rooms. Within the decade it became a thirty-two room conventillo, in which, for the last fifty years, living conditions had been almost unbearable.

In short, in this house, unlike what happened with the lot of the Coni Press building, subsequent owners kept adding rooms and dividing them, thereby impoverishing their lifestyle; however, the house still functioned as such and the building managed to survive, in spite of having sixteen different owners in less than two hundred years. Unfortunately, in 1990, the inside was torn down and the facade restored without respect for the original design; consequently, today it is almost impossible to have an accurate idea of how it looked when it was first built.

THE PEÑA HOUSE: FROM ARISTOCRACY TO THE *COVENTILLO* (SAN LORENZO 392)

Much the same as the Elía house and the Coni Press, during the excavations performed in the Peña house, two very humble households from the eighteenth century were found, having been built in lots close to the Tercero. In this case the building stands at the corner of Defensa and San Lorenzo Streets, just in front of another lot excavated at Defensa 751 (Figures 2 and 25). San Lorenzo Street is in itself the relict of the existence of the Tercero, until it was tubed in 1865.

Excavations carried out in 1995 located the remains of two households: a small dwelling with adobe walls built on the upper part of the lot, on Defensa Street, and another bigger one on San Lorenzo. No doubt the first one consisted of at least one single chamber, though evidence was found of a second room; the other house was larger, perhaps consisting of two or three chambers. In the entire extension of this site and from the archaeological point of view, the eighteenth century appears somehow faded; though it is present in the form of ceramics and

other artifacts, the building process of the Peña house was so aggressive that only a small amount of evidence remains of the past.

Around 1835, the structures that existed in the place were torn down, the lot refilled to level the ground, and a large family residence with two patios was built. The main chambers were made of brick and the back sections of wood. The house had a water well with no reservoir, several draining pits, and at least one additional large pit used as a garbage disposal. The study of architectural remains and the archaeological excavation showed that the building respected the aesthetic patterns of colonial times, even though it was a typical neo-Classical residence. It was the home of a very traditional family in town: the Peñas. Interestingly, the purchase of the lot was very complicated, because the prior ownership of the land cast some doubts: it would seem that former owners had never accomplished the corresponding legal inscriptions; maybe, this is why prior to 1840 documents of this lot could not be found. The Peña family lived there only for a few years. Around 1875 they moved to the north section of the city and the building was thereafter subdivided and rented. Just a little portion of that subdivision would survive to our days: in 1906 most of the facade was made anew, and even the area that had been occupied by the old main house was modified. Since then and until 1990, when it was finally abandoned, fourteen different owners used the building for a great variety of commercial activities. In short, the grand Peña residency was used as such for not more than thirty years.

Excavations in this structure showed that the owners' lifestyle was truly luxurious, matched only with that of Defensa 751. The main garbage pit yielded 1,219 pieces of ceramics, particularly Creamware and Pearlware types, in a proportion of 0.5% and 99.5% respectively between domestic and imported ones. There were perfumes from Paris and Köln, objects made of carved ivory and bone, big dishes, carved glass jars with a corresponding set of glasses, an important amount of lamp chimneys and tulip-shaped lamp shades, wine cups, toys, and other sophisticated ceramic objects such as gravy dishes, trays, creampots, and compotiers.

The family house would be quickly modified by means of a speculative real estate maneuver that yielded important benefits: the rear section of the building was demolished to build instead two parallel conventillos with access from Defensa Street, while the main house was subdivided into four sections, resulting in very tiny households, also used for rentals. The entire building was transformed into a conventillo, which offered very precarious living conditions for the tenants and huge profits for the landlords.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN A *CONVENTILLO* AND EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE LOWER SOCIAL CLASS (DEFENSA 774)

One of the conventillos mentioned before that used to be part of the Peña house has been excavated on the basis of one principal hypothesis: had this building, throughout its eighty years of life, undergone changes and transformations that would express alterations in the way it was used? Thus, as a repeated event that archaeology has shown in relation to the architecture of Buenos Aires, it would be interesting to see if that also held true for the lowest social class households: that there were radical physical changes, but even though all these modifications helped to enhance the decoration and the image of the building, they did not contribute to significantly improving the everyday life of its dwellers (Figures 2 and 25).

The structure was built to eliminate almost every trace of the activities carried out there in the past: of the magnificent Peña house, only some reused bricks were seen in the foundations, together with a thin layer of very compacted materials, namely, ceramics, bones, and glass. The conventillo that has been excavated is one of the two that were built, side by side and simultaneously, within the same lot. They shared a partition that separated both buildings, there was no connecting door, and the tenement houses themselves consisted of a row of square rooms with the respective patios at the side. Both buildings had a commercial store in front and a privy at the back. Each room was rented by an entire family or group of individuals who were forced to develop their daily activities in those minimal spaces, sharing the only privy, the patio, and the sink for washing the laundry. They cooked on portable furnaces that were placed just off each of the doors that led to their sleeping quarters.

Research has shown that the tenement house was at first built with bricks fixed with lime, that the quality of masonry and plastering was very poor, and that the floors were made of brick. Water was obtained by an elementary water well that went no deeper than the first water table—a water unfit for drinking, in reality—and a privy with a hole; both the well and the privy were shared by the two conventillos, as the respective cesspools had been placed just below the partition wall. When we think of fourteen families coexisting under such circumstances, we can only conclude their living conditions were tragic (Schávelzon 1996b).

Around 1915, big changes took place in the tenement house: at the time when the new construction began, it became necessary to raise another partition wall, perhaps because the conventillo did not

have one, and it leaned on the wall of the other owner. Removing the wall meant that the roof had to be torn down, and that some sections of the old walls and floors had to be rebuilt. It would seem this opportunity was taken advantage of to introduce some quality improvements: roofs were built with iron beams and French tiles, walls were painted in colors and redecorated, new parquet floors were laid, and flat ceilings with plaster moldings were put in place. There were also new tile floors for the patio and electricity. In 1893, a running water system and a drainage system for the sewers were put in place. With all this the looks of the building were enhanced, but tenants still had one and the same privy and an inadequate supply of water and electricity, However, it is evident that none of these improvements were to last long without proper maintenance; we see evidence of coat after coat of new paint in the rooms, but in general, the conventillo gradually deteriorated once again.

This excavation led us to find that many municipal regulations had not been complied with: floors had no air chambers; wells—the water well and the cesspool—were too close to each other; and no attention was paid to the adequate relation between privies and users. No attempt was made to provide window openings in the rooms where meals were cooked inside—we found lampblack on floors and walls. There was no isolating coat in the foundations, and even after 1905, when regulations were approved, they still had no kitchen. Even the plans of pipes and water installations were faked, as were the distances between the pits in those documents that we could revive.

In the different draining pits, evidence was recovered that provided information about food: meals mainly consisted of red meats, fowl, and poultry and were not restricted to the usual diet of beef, as remains of harvest mice and alligators have also been identified. Other artifacts, such as long cigarette holders for ladies, bone and ivory ornaments, and coins, were recovered. These numerous variables, which went so far beyond what we had expected, have been interpreted as a direct consequence of the sound presence of foreign immigrants, Europeans particularly, that lived in this kind of household.

In short, evidence shows that living conditions in the conventillos were dramatic; and that in spite of eventual changes that had to do with decoration or looks, things never really changed. The material culture recovered seems to confirm this idea, as the findings correspond to a period when objects were of a better quality, though standards remained the same for quite some time. This example demonstrates the dramatic and gradual impoverishment process suffered in the south, while wealthy families moved elsewhere leaving their residencies, now

changed into tenement houses, to be rented out under almost inhuman conditions. This example was also useful for understanding the complexities of the prevailing social mechanisms, particularly for foreign immigrants who had no other choice but to live in these conventillos. However, and most probably, though we do not know for sure, life in their home countries must have been even harder, or at least the possibilities of progress must have been smaller.

THE HUERGO STORES: A GRAND FAMILY PROJECT IN AN EVER-CHANGING CITY (BALCARCE 433)

These excavations were conducted in 1996, at a place six blocks away from the city's center where the typical and well-known restaurant Michelangelo has been in business for the past thirty years. The construction of this building dates from 1848–50, in reality, what was left of an outstanding architectural construction undertaken by Carlos María Huergo, who built it to house his stores and distilleries and also to use it as his home. The site was selected for excavation not only for the quality and originality of its architecture, but also because of its location, at a place where one of the few changes in the structure of the block ever made in the downtown area had taken place (Figures 2 and 25).

The entire block had been occupied in the past by the Santo Domingo Convent, where monks settled by 1601, after a long sequence of changes of the original lands that were granted to them by Garay (Millé 1964). There the monks built the first church and cloisters on the block that opened to the river slope, where their sheep would graze and where they had placed the orchard and some plantations. This group of structures was in use for a long time until it collapsed in 1752 (Buschiazzo 1951; Furlong 1946a). Meanwhile, and one year prior to this collapse, new construction had been undertaken to replace these buildings, directed by Antonio Masella, a well-known architect of the times. The construction was finished in 1784, after several changes in the direction; today, they stand as some of the most outstanding religious structures in the city.

In 1823, and due to conflicts generated between the state and the Church, a strong policy of reduction of the Church's temporal power was applied, because religious orders were the owners of most of the urban and rural properties in the country. In the case of the Dominicans, the entire convent was expropriated and transferred to the newly created university; at the same time, the decision was made to cut the block in half to open a new street and to sell the resulting new

lots to future private owners. It was 1823, and never before had anyone tried to fracture the reticular plan of the city designed by Juan de Garay in 1580. On the contrary, at that time, the projects to regularize the streets and the alignment of facades were quite common. The project to open the street was the work of French engineer Próspero Catelín. That is how the new block was created and lots sold one by one to new private owners (Schávelzon and Silveira 1998).

The portion of land excavated changed hands several times between 1823 and 1833, until Huergo finally bought it; in fact, he bought two adjacent lots, thus becoming the owner of half of the block. There he had in mind to build his home, his distillery, and a big wholesale store. Although his main activity was distilling liquor, the location of this lot in front of the custom house made it even more commercially interesting, as it could also be used as a warehouse for imported merchandise. The exact date when construction works began is unknown; however, we know that the distillery and the house were initiated around 1840, while the large store and warehouse were still being built by 1848. Huergo's death the following year interrupted the construction, and following long litigations, the family, by 1850, could finally conclude the project.

This impressive work undertaken by Huergo constituted quite a simple industrial building; the two-story distillery, with its basement, was placed at the corner, and a number of chambers for the family on the terrace. At the side of the distillery he placed a three-story warehouse for wholesale merchandise separated in four parallel aisles; for the circulation, he opened an entrance on one street that led to an exit on the street at the back. The first building still looked like a traditional colonial house with a central patio, but the other one was of a peculiar modernity for a city such as Buenos Aires, after the best English tradition of brick constructions. In Buenos Aires there were no buildings with superimposed self-supporting vaults; these were introduced by English engineer Eduard Taylor in those same years. This structure is so much like others built by Taylor that we have reason to believe this was also one of his projects. The way this construction functioned was also innovating, as for the first time someone took advantage of the river slope to facilitate the activities that were to be carried out within. Merchandise was picked up at the custom house and carried along Belgrano Street, in a soft climb, to the main entrance of the building located in the upper section of the lot, to be directly introduced to the second level, from which they descended through internal holes or by means of jibs to the first level or directly onto the carts, greatly simplifying loading and unloading operations. This was the system Taylor would use in other buildings—custom houses all of them, where load-

ing and unloading was permanent—combining natural and artificial differences in the ground level.

Archaeological excavations carried out inside the building helped us to see that this structure was built in the same place where the old convent of Santo Domingo used to stand, though Taylor cut down the river slope for the construction work. Perhaps this explains why most of the soil was archaeologically sterile. The only structure found from the convent was the bottom of a 3-meter-wide garbage pit used for kitchen wastes, dated from 1790 to 1820. This pit yielded large amounts of fish and mammalian bones from cattle and sheeps, in addition to birds, fowl, and poultry. There were abundant amounts of ceramics, glass, and other everyday objects that had been used by the monks. However, one of the basements was refilled by 1848–50 with wastes originated in a place where meals were taken, apparently a *fonda* or modest eating house placed there for the workers. With the food wastes, other construction debris was thrown into the pit, such as fragments of brick, paving and roof tiles, and a wood and iron shaker probably used for building the vaults. It was interesting to compare the two different groups of food wastes, as with only a thirty-year interval, they clearly proved to correspond to different social groups, with different economic possibilites and different eating habits, as were those of the Dominicans and the workers. Dominicans consumed large quantities of fish, while workers ate beef (and only about 2% of fish); the monks used fine tableware, and bottles of liquor were scarce, while workers used to drink large quantities of wine and their tableware was cheap. But they did have something in common: among the Dominicans, imported products represented an average of 92.14% of the objects found, while at the fonda of the workers, unbelievable as this may seem, imported tableware represented a 97.53%. The quality of the artifacts was, evidently, much different. The diet of Dominicans is less varied but the *cuisine* is better: variety does not indicate status but rather the search, day by day, of the best prices.

Following Huergo's death the place remained untouched for a while, but with time, his grandsons made the decision to divide it: first, the house with the distillery and a part of the store were sold, and subsequently torn down; later, the lot was fractioned into three, and by the early twentieth century, large buildings were being built there. Only the warehouse survived, although many changes had been gradually introduced; as to the facades, the rear one was modified and the front one definitely destroyed. This archaeological research enabled us not only to take a close look at the feeding habits of both social groups involved and to establish valuable comparisons, but also to understand the details of the process of appropriation and further use of the river

slopes. Since the foundational date, the city had thought of, and used this place just as an edge. Except for the advantages it represented for the fort, the slope in itself was of no particular value and no one wanted to live in it, unless there was no other choice. After this construction, it became evident the place could be of use, and in the following thirty years some of the most important structures in the city were built on top of that slope, taking advantage of the difference of elevation.

IN THE CENTRAL AREA: THE HOUSE OF MARÍA JOSEFA EZCURRA (ALSINA 455)

Less than one block away from the central Plaza de Mayo, the home of María Josefa Ezcurra, placed on top of the deteriorated remains of a mideighteenth-century Jesuit house and built around 1801, still stands (Figure 2). The patios and some sections of the interior have been systematically excavated, showing an intense utilization of the lot, where one sector of the original soil of the city, prior to the construction of this house, was brought to light (Figure 29a). From this sector ceramic remains, bones, building materials, and glass were recovered, all corresponding to the late sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, with a remarkable variety of Afro and Indian ceramics radiocarbon dated by 1590 ± 50. People walked on that portion of ground, and no constructions were built, so many other remains accumulated throughout two centuries, including a variety of objects, animal fat, and bones. This indicates that in spite of the central location of this lot, a good part of it remained unoccupied until the early nineteenth century, in a coincidence with other noncentral lots excavated. The house was enlarged shortly after, around 1801, then again around 1860 and finally by 1890.

Garbage pits found dated between 1801 and 1820 were remarkably rich in materials, associated with the social status of the owners. There are two interesting phenomena found in those pits: first, the high incidence of Spanish mayolicas from Triana (28% of the total ceramics) at a time when it was quite late for such a thing, and second, the identical presence of Creamware tablewares (28.27%) manufactured by Neil and Company; together with this, a rich collection of carved glasses and luxury objects has been found (totaling a 54.20% of all the nonconstructive objects recovered). The very peculiar use of the topography of the parcel responds to the standard preeighteenth-century patterns: considering that Plaza de Mayo exhibits the highest ground level in the central area, the parcel is slightly unleveled toward the entrance of the house, with a north-south orientation. When the first house was built, the ground

level of the backyard was not modified; only the portion that remained under the house was touched, so that the servants quarters remained 1.50 meters above the rest of the construction, a very peculiar feature indeed. This has continued throughout time and up to the present days, as a memory of the old habits of using the varied levels of the city prior to the nineteenth century.

Since the decade of the 1860s, the function of the building has been continually changing: after another family used it as a residency for a few years, it was turned into a printing house, whose system for the semiunderground machinery was left in place. Throughout the twentieth century the process of change and deterioration was permanent until the house was finally abandoned in 1970. In 1997, restoration has been initiated to use the building as a museum. In a sense, this residency sticks to the usual standards in the city: an original colonial house rebuilt to be used and to have the looks of a luxury residency, for approximately fifty years. Later on a printing press operated on the ground floor, and there were tenants in the upper level; but the building finally ended in deterioration and neglect.

FIVE HOUSES ON OLD VICTORIA STREET

When Juan de Garay distributed the lots in 1580, he decided that the cabildo, or city hall, was to be built in front of the Plaza Mayor (Figure 2). There, a first construction was begun in 1608–12, and later, in 1729, works for a new building were initiated; the latter is the one that has, in part, survived to our days. At one side, on the old Victoria Street (presently Hipólito Yrigoyen), we have excavated what today is a plaza that has been incorporated to the cabildo. There we found the remains of five houses that were short-lived (Figure 33, p. 101).

The cabildo had historically lacked a sufficient budget, resources were scarce, and during its first years of existence this shortage of funds made it necessary to pawn the few silver objects registered in the inventory to obtain some cash. Due to this, authorities occasionally tried to sell portions of the lot, which was large enough to accommodate such cuttings. When construction works for the new building were undertaken in 1729, the quest for economic resources became more urgent, as large amounts of money were needed for the new structure; thus, authorities had to make the radical decision of selling a strip of the lot on Victoria Street (Torre Revello 1951). Even though this transaction involved public property, the sale was not properly documented, but it is clear that the property was transferred in parts between 1800

and 1810. A few years later one section of the cabildo was rented, with the subsequent appearance of a fifth house, which was recovered before the end of the nineteenth century. Four small houses were built, measuring 7.66 meters wide by 20 meters long. Of that total of five houses, four have been archaeologically excavated (Schávelzon 1995). It was observed that at least two of them were built twice in the same century, while the remaining two had suffered little or minimal modifications. Surprisingly, these four households were built as a result of a decision by the city government, while later on it was the same city government that had to tear them down to revert the entire situation.

To provide an accurate description of these households, we shall follow a west-to-east order: the first one is the so-called Amstrong-Bosé house (last names of the former owners), which was in its origin a small private residence with a small backyard and the U-shaped nineteenth-century typological scheme embracing a patio. By 1881 the house had been demolished and the space was occupied by a two-story store with a free plan and a huge basement that occupied the total underground surface of the lot. When the 1982 demolition was performed, the remains were thrown inside the basement, so that by means of these archaeological excavations, a good number of door and window frames, staircases, iron beams, and an important group of building materials could be recovered.

The second construction, known as the García-Lara house, was built as a residential house, but around 1885 it was dramatically modified by replacing the inner supporting walls with iron columns and turned into a store. That remodeling caused important changes in the interior, which was detected during the excavations. At the time these modifications were made, a large underground water cistern was built. At the rear, a water well with a diameter of 95 cm was found. This well is older than the entire structure, and the refill in the inside yielded even older objects: Indian and mestizo ceramics, tinajas, olive jars, and mayolicas. The house was built over a thin layer of the eighteenth century, and even though it was almost completely destroyed by later interventions, evidences appeared in several squares of the grids.

Materials recovered from the water well, originated in some nearby site with remains of the seventeenth century, have shown the presence of Indian (15.00%), regional (57.15%), and European ceramics (27.85%). Creamware (0.70%) and Pearlware (1.4%) fragments have been interpreted as materials corresponding to workers hired for the refilling operation; thus, what we have is a group in which domestic materials prevail (72.15%), a very similar situation to that of the garbage pit at the Moreno 350 site, and to the well-known contexts of those times.

The third structure is the Peña-Barés house, a building with a history that has posed difficulties for interpretation, being the latest one built (maybe by the midnineteenth century): a two-story house that appears to have been frequently transformed. In 1883, its ground floor was being occupied by the Barés Press; from this printing office many material evidences were recovered in the refills of an underground cistern, where a good number of the clichés were buried together with other objects that were no longer in use when the plant was abandoned in 1930. These data were recovered by oral history. This case is a good example of how fast changes took place: the first residency of the Peña family was used for thirty years only; it was later enlarged to house a printing office in the ground floor and a firm of lawyers in the first level, and in the late twentieth century it ended up as a conventillo.

The last structure surveyed, known as the Rebución-Basualdo house, could only be partially studied because its setting under new construction made excavation works very difficult. A house built by midnineteenth century was identified, which was torn down to build, in 1901, a commercial structure with a basement; at the time when this basement was built, a good deal of the foundation and older cultural evidences were lost.

The excavations and studies completed in these four buildings, and the consideration of the fifth that was not surveyed, constitute a good example of the fast transformations that occurred in the urban center, and of the undiscriminated use the city authorities have made of its lots. After they were sold to obtain funds, the lots were used for domestic life for a short period of less than two generations, to be later transformed into stores for half a century. In 1982 they were housing cheap stores in the ground floors and conventillos in the remaining spaces. At that point, during the decade of the 1950s, the city authorities were forced to buy them and tear them down in 1982. This represents a good synthesis of the transformation processes of the urban land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

ASHES TO ASHES: THE BARRILES HOUSE IN THE LEZAMA PARK

What today is Parque Lezama is an extension of land in the southern boundaries of the old city, located precisely at the southern edge of the river slope (Figures 2 and 30). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was a place in the most elevated part of the city; it

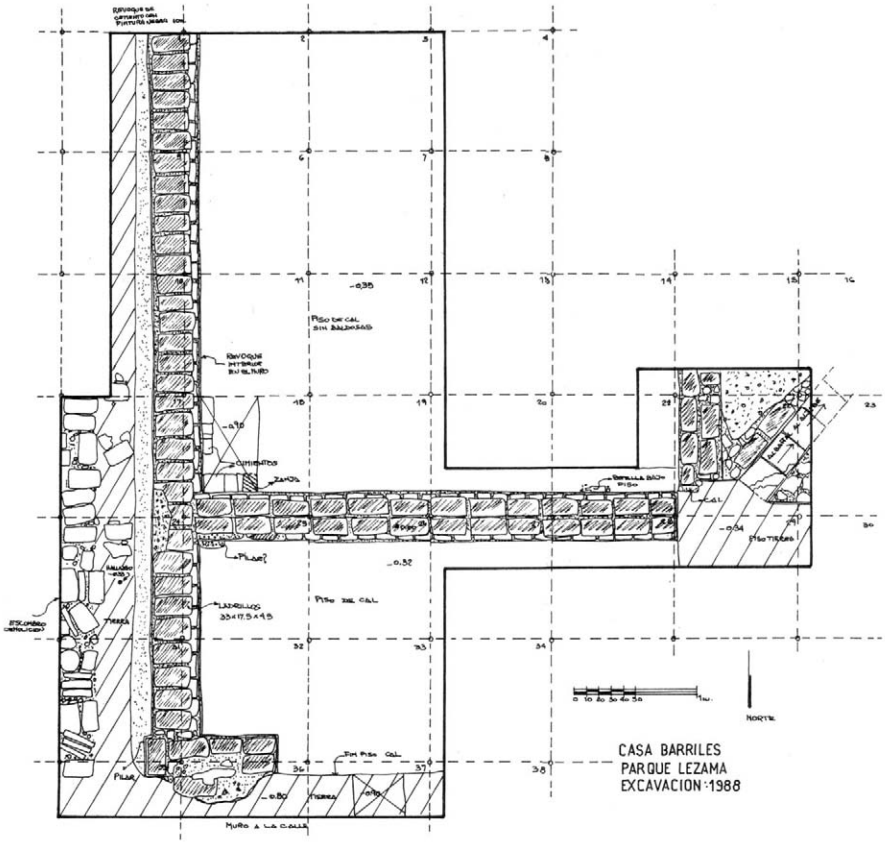


Figure 30. The Barriles House buried beneath Parque Lezama, during the excavations: a middle-class household that was used for only one generation.

was a part of the ejido and had never had a permanent settlement. In the eighteenth century it was occupied by a powder house and a military garrison, and after those lots were sold, an important villa was built by Manuel Gallego. In 1812, Gallego sold it to the Englishman Daniel Mackinlay, and in 1826 the property was again transferred to John R. Horne, from the United States, who made a model suburban residency with extended gardens and a magnificent park full of flowers. In 1857 the estate was bought by Gregorio Lezama, who built a huge mansion that embraced the preexisting structures. In 1889, the nation bought it, under a specially favorable agreement, to make a public park and promenade, and since 1897, the former Lezama residency

has been the house of the Museo Histórico Nacional; all other preexisting structures were demolished (Figure 2).

Within that big park, on Garay Street, the remains of a house built approximately in 1860 and demolished in 1898, owned by Magdalena Barriles, were discovered and consequently, excavated. This was a house with six chambers embracing a central patio, and double access from the front and from the back, a very rare typology in the city. The house was not rich, in spite of its facade with columns and moldings, of the floors covered with imported French tiles, of the glazed tiles that decorated some walls and the aljibe placed in the middle of the patio. Inside, walls must have been ornamented with plaster in the shape of flowers and geometrical patterns. Cultural materials found correspond in time and category to a house that, although being very acceptable from the point of view of architecture, was quite far from the central district, almost touching the southern boundaries (Lorandi, Schávelzon, Fantuzzi 1989).

An interesting fact about this house is that it was built in a location with no other constructive precedents, as nothing was found in historic documents or through archaeology. This was an important building, but surprisingly, it was torn down less than forty years after it was built, and its remains buried under the new park. This, again, is an example of the aggressive transformation processes in the forms of urban grounds; we see here that a complete block of houses is built, demolished shortly after, and its remains buried.

HOW A HOUSE CHANGED THROUGHOUT TIME (CHILE 830)

In 1993, the building that houses the Museo Nacional del Traje (National Costumes Museum) was studied, with the purpose of analyzing the process of change in the plumbing, meaning the physical history of urban salubrity, of a household that was untouched for almost a whole century (Figure 2). The first structure spotted in the site was a small house built in the early eighteenth century, owned until 1796 by Petronila Carvallo; after she passed away, the property was inherited by the two subsequent generations of her family until 1871, when the last of the heirs passed away during the yellow fever epidemic. Because the owner had left no will, the detailed inventory was made by a public attorney; therefore, today we have an accurate description of the interior (Willemsen 1994).

The house was thereafter sold and a couple of years later torn down, to build a large residence in the new fashionable Italian-like

style, following a scheme of two half patios and ten chambers; the access to the house was made through a zaguán that led directly to the first patio. In 1885 this residence began to be gradually modified, until it finally became a structure with three patios and almost thirty chambers; in 1971 it was purchased by the national government and used as a museum.

The primitive house had the average dimensions common in those times: it was a rectangular structure placed close to the front of the lot but behind the front line; there, around 1790, a false facade was built, and the house had two chambers, one of which was subdivided. There was a unique panel door, old dung-made plasters, a tiled roof, an internal glass door, and only one window. This was a typical two-room colonial household, where one of the rooms was illuminated through the door and the other one through the window. No doubt by 1871 it already was an urban antiquity standing at an outstanding location, more suitable for a residency built according to the new fashions and high purchase capacities of the residents; and that was the destiny of that old construction.

During its first forty years, the new house, the one that still stands, was constantly enlarged by adding a glass screen in the patio and small quarters for the service, as the domestic lifestyle was becoming increasingly demanding in the nineteenth century. The house was built in a moment when the bourgeoisie was modifying old habits related to eating and entertaining, so both the dining room and the living room were considered the most significant spaces in a house, and they had to be large and confortable. If we compare this building with the Goyena house built in 1822, described earlier in this book, the dining room, which had no entity as such, became the second most important and large space in the house. The same happened with the separation between the second and the third patio, which was defined by 1907.

The archaeological survey of the aljibe, located in the patio at the back, helped us to observe how it was built, around 1871, with a large brick sewer that carried the water from the terraces. In 1889, with the new plumbing laid for drains first and for running water subsequently, the well was refilled, the vault torn down to have the access sealed, and a large ceramic pipe for drainage was put in place. The system was used until 1920, when once again everything was put away to be replaced by iron plumbing, which is today still partially in service.

This is another good example of how rudely colonial architecture was replaced and left aside, late in this case, by totally different architectural forms adapted to the new fashions of the nineteenth century,

with different characteristics related to the occupation of the urban land, the use of internal space, and its intercourse with the streets.

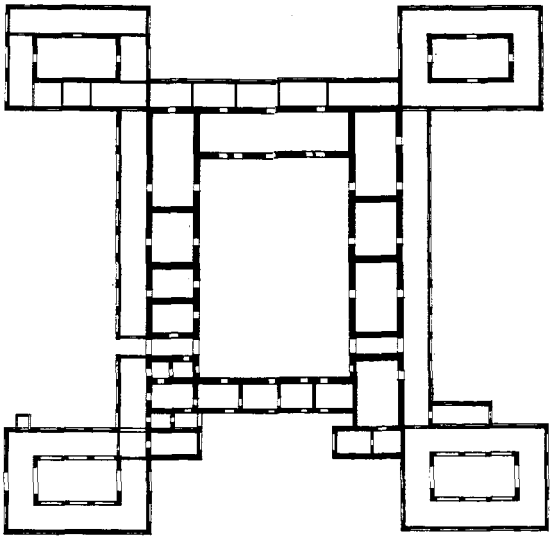
FROM A SUBURBAN HOUSEHOLD TO RESIDENCE OF A GOVERNOR: THE CASERÓN DE ROSAS

In 1837 the governor of Buenos Aires made the decision to build a residence of his own in the outskirts of the city, with enough land to have some plantations, a recreational area with free access to all, and a magnificent palace that would reflect his dominant social position. As there were no such large unoccupied spaces available in the urban borders, he endeavored to buy one by one the parcels that was part of what was known by then as Palermo—the name of the first dweller—a process that took four years. By the end of that period he had become the owner of a very large extension of land, 535 hectares, well communicated within the city, and of an additional rather small country house, where he moved to closely survey the works that were to be initiated to enhance the property. He ordered important refills to stop floods, irrigation and drainage canals, a huge pond with a swimming area, and a variety of minor buildings to house a kitchen, the military security, a nursery, and even a veterinarian's office. Native plants were obtained and cultivated, all of which resulted in a truly magnificent park. The city had never witnesses such an amazing urbanization project, which completely turned the lowlands into beautiful gardens well taken care of throughout the entire year (Schávelzon and Ramos 1989; 1991).

In 1838 the great works of architecture began for the so-called Caserón, entrusted to an almost unknown builder, Miguel Cabrera, who on the basis of the preexisting nucleus of the house added a large central patio surrounded by columns and four groups of chambers with portals (Figures 31a–c). This kind of structure was an attempt to preserve the traditional local architecture avoiding the new European-like aesthetics, which since the government of Rivadavia ten years later had prevailed in the city. Although the Caserón was an architecture that responded to the times when neo-Classicism was felt in more than one way, the resulting aesthetics were remarkably traditionalist and sober. But its large dimensions, its location in front of the river, and the landscape works carried out in the surroundings made it one of the most important buildings in Buenos Aires (Figure 32).

The use of the open space was unique in the city, considering the inclusion of animals and plants, of an artificial lake with boats and even a little steamboat, together with a ship run aground that was

A



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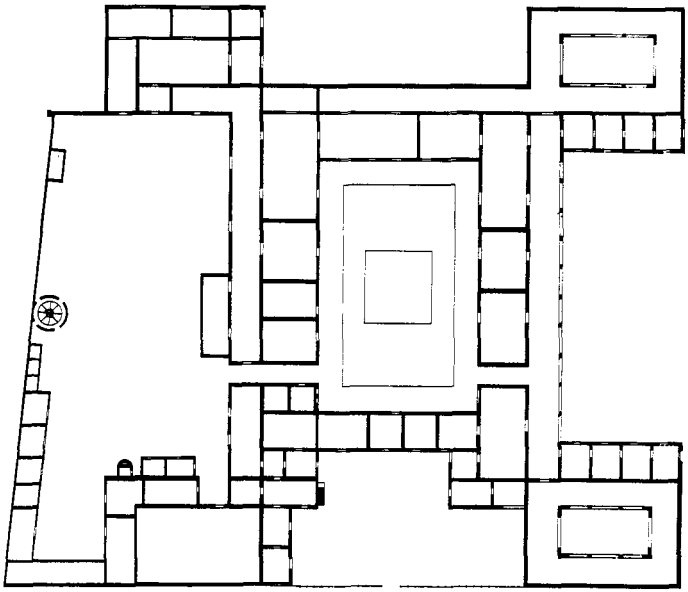
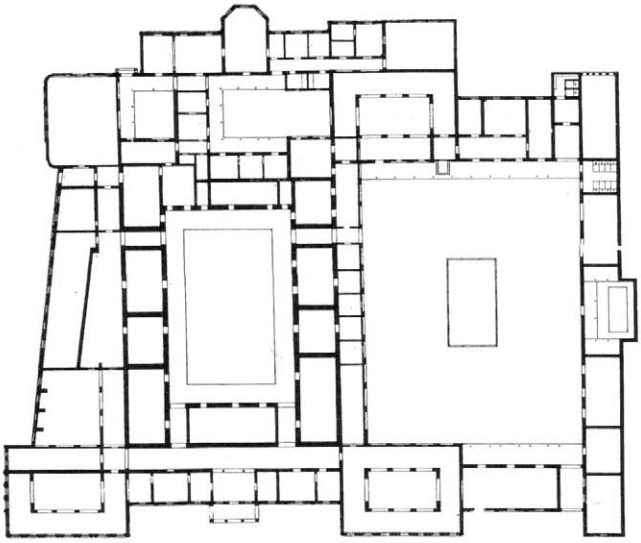


Figure 31. Changing process at the residence of Governor Rosas: (A) a plan of 1875 showing (in thick lines) what was left of the original work performed between 1839–1843; (B) plan with changes introduced between 1852–1892; (C) the project by Enrique Aberg for additional remodelings drawn shortly before the demolition of 1899; and (D) detail of the excavations at the front of the structure (Archives of the CAU).

C



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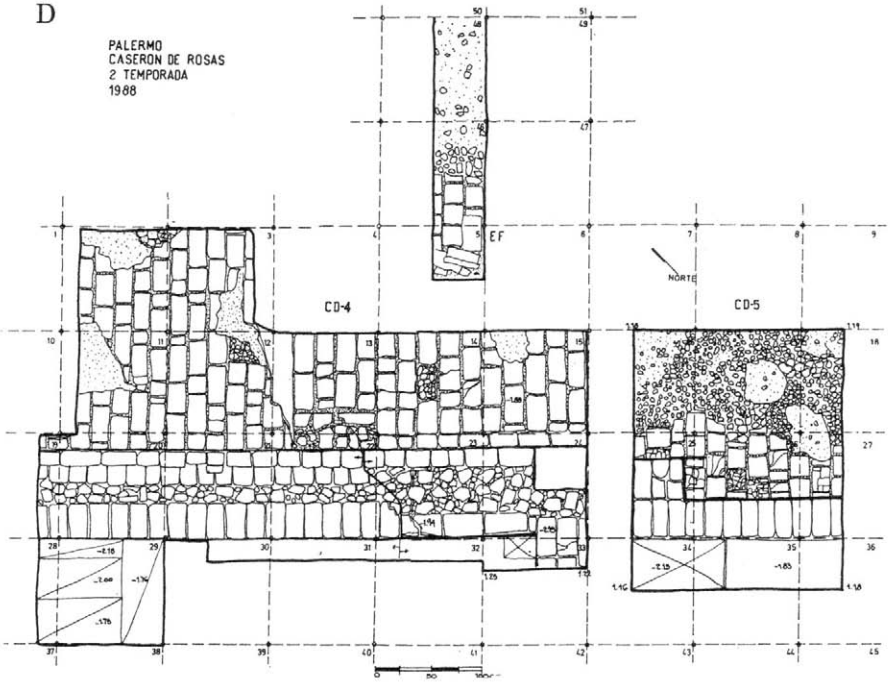

transformed into a dancing hall, the galleries of trees, and the free access of the public to the property.

Rosas was defeated in the battle of Caseros in 1852, and as a result, profound changes took place in all matters concerning national politics. His ideals and his followers were persecuted first and banned completely shortly thereafter. The terrains began to deteriorate quickly and even the residency was subsequently used as a barracks, a fairgrounds, a school of arts and crafts, a military academy and a navy academy, until it was dynamited in 1899. External and internal spaces were modified, galleries and colonnades were sealed with walls, windows were also walled up, and someone even had the bad taste to paint the lower half black.

Our historical-archaeological project intended to bring the building back from oblivion by the recovery of physical remains, and by making observations on the forms, shapes, constructive systems, and building sequences. We were also particularly interested in achieving a better understanding of the relation between the preexisting structure and what Cabrera had built, information that did not exist up until then. So many things were not known in relation to the building, the environments, and the material culture of its dwellers, that findings proved highly significant in a pioneer experience of garden archaeology.

The excavations allow us to corroborate several hypotheses about dimensions, precise locations, wall structures, and constructive systems applied, which were in fact far more related to the colonial tradition than to the European-like modernity of those times. We were also able to make a sound approach to lifestyle, on the basis of material culture. It is convenient to remember that dozens of books have been written about the building and the lifestyle of its owners; however, the magnitude of the political events that took place in that residency by far prevailed over the observation of other issues that were not connected with politics. Would history have ever imagined that the man who prohibited imports of products from Europe, the man who declared war to France and England and fought these two countries, would use English Refined Whiteware and English and French porcelain at his table, that his floors were paved with French tiles, and that even the toothbrushes came from Paris? Among the items recovered during the excavations, we must outline that of the tableware ceramics that we could spot, only one fragment was of probable local manufacture; however, there were a few paving tiles, intertwined with the European ones, that had been manufactured in the region. Daily life at the governor's residency encountered the same problems as the rest of the city: the almost total nonexistence, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of local manufactures.

Figure 32. Large residence of Governor Rosas at the outskirts of the city: an engraving by Leon Palliere, of the late 1840s. The excavated portion corresponds to the small household around which the residence was built, showing a different roof at the center of the image.

Landscape archaeology allows us to find not only material remains of structures that were never mentioned before in historic documents, such as fountains, cages for animals, and pedestals for sculptures, but also the open and closed water carrying systems. With this information we were able to partly reconstruct the sophisticated system of supply and evacuation of water, as well as the formative processes of the site in itself, with its refills and alterations. With this body of information, a different history of the park and its remarkable constructions would later be written (Ramos and Schávelzon 1992).

Again, the Caserón de Rosas stands as an example of the ongoing construction-destruction process so typical in the city; the structure was built around an older one and served as a private grand residency for a short period of twelve years (Figure 32). After it was looted and abandoned, the uses and forms of it were modified permanently for the following forty years, and later were completely torn down and the entire terrain transformed. In this way, the most important work of urban planning and architecture in the history of Buenos Aires, at least up to the late nineteenth century, had been in use for only twelve years! However, the unrestricted use of the space established by Rosas was respected and today most of the area is a public promenade.

TRADITION AND PRESTIGE OF SPAIN INAMERICA: THE CABILDO

Every Spanish city in America had to have a cabildo, a municipal institution in charge of watching over the interests of neighbors, considering as such only white men and head of families. Thus, cabildos had a special significance in the community, and a good deal of the everyday problems were solved during the meetings held there. To these purposes a building was indispensable, and following the Spanish tradition, it should be of generous dimensions and remarkable features, a construction meant to be noticeable in the city (Figures 2 and 6). In the Americas such buildings were placed in front of the main plaza, and responded to a standardized typology consisting of a wide capitulary chamber for the meetings, a balcony or windows opening to the street, a gallery in the ground floor where commercial activities would be allocated, a patio in front of a prison, and a number of offices for the royal treasury and general accountings. These were usually very large buildings, crowned with one or more towers (Figure 13).

The lot where the cabildo would stand had been determined at the time of the original repartimiento of 1580 made by Garay, and had remained unoccupied; the lack of funds to make plans for a building, even

for a modest one, made it necessary that meetings were held in the fort or elsewhere. In 1608 the construction of the first cabildo was initiated and by 1612 the building had been completed (Torre Revello 1951). It was a modest structure with adobe walls, to the extent that according to historic documents, by 1624 it was already at the verge of collapsing. Since that time a large number of additional works were carried out, so that again the cabildo had to temporarily hold its sessions at the fort. The conditions of the building must have been unsafe, due especially to the fact that two fortified towers were about to fall. According to the few descriptions available, the building was small, made with modest materials, and even though the towers must have projected an imposing image, the structure occupied but a small section of the lot (Figure 33).

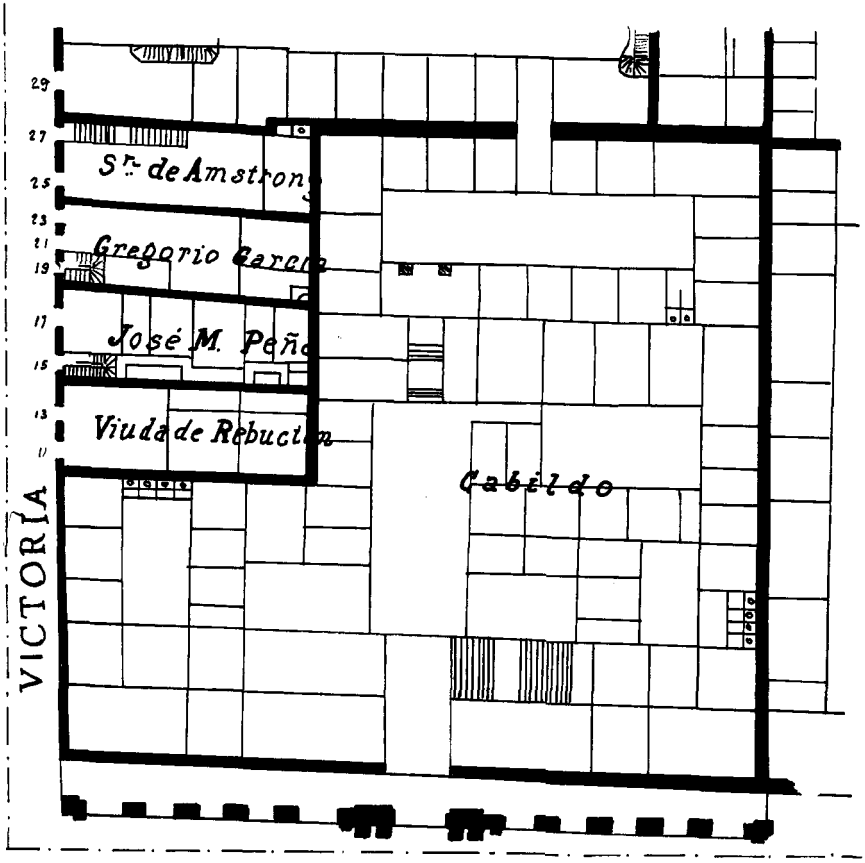

Figure 33. The cabildo, in a schematic plan of 1899; the four houses at the old Victoria Street described in the text can be seen in one of the angles.

In 1725, and after great efforts aimed at gathering the necessary funds, the time came to initiate a new construction, so the preexisting building was torn down. After several changes introduced in the project, two of the most remarkable contemporary Jesuit architects were appointed to take over the construction work: one of them was Juan Bautista Prímoli, in charge of the ground plan, and the other, Andrés Blanqui, master designer and builder. The new cabildo was a two-story building connected to the plaza by means of a low portico and with a patio placed at the rear by the prison. This construction was a challenge for the city, as impressive as any of its magnificent churches, and once it was finished, its imposing tower crowned the most significant civil (nonreligious) structure ever built in Buenos Aires in the eighteenth century. Interior chambers were vaulted, as were also the portals on four sides opening to the sidewalk in front of the plaza. The project, according to our findings during the archaeological works, included at least two underground tunnels that were to join the ones that were being built under the church of San Ignacio and the convent of the Jesuits. Although this subject is analyzed separately, this was a part of an organic project of connecting the main buildings in the city as a defense system.

Progress in the construction was slow, and twenty-three years later a good part of it had been concluded, even though the chapel would not be finished until several years later (Torre Revello 1951). There would be constant interruptions, changes of directors, and the usual lack of funds and supplies. For instance, window glasses would start to be put in place by 1752 and the tower by 1763. Since then, there were hardly any changes made in the cabildo, excepting the chapel, the prison, and a few minor details, until 1879, when it was transformed into the House of Justice—or Court of Justice—and at that time, dramatic modifications were introduced. Architect Pedro Benoit competed with new buildings where almost the entire surface was occupied by the patio, leaving only just a few small open spaces. The Capitular Chamber and the other offices were redecorated with moldings and ornaments, and facades were made anew together with the tower, which this time looked taller. In 1889 the new tower was torn down, together with the northern section of the building; all of these renovations happening only ten years after the cabildo was totally rebuilt. In 1931 the southern section was demolished and in 1938 the cabildo was declared a national historic monument; at that time it was restored and transformed into a museum.

Our excavation was entirely conducted outside the main building, in the two patios that presently surround it. Basically, a slight occupa-

tion of the seventeenth century was detected with no remains of architecture, this deriving from the fact that any remains of the first cabildo disappeared when the present Diagonal Sur Street was opened. But at least we were able to spot one thin layer of occupation of those times 1.50 meters below the present level of the floor. On top of it, there was evidence of use in the eighteenth century, probably from the construction works of the present building, whose level has been increased. The first years are properly represented with ceramic types seldom found in Buenos Aires, such as the Orange Micaceous, the Feldspar Inlaid, Redware, and Melado, perhaps a consequence of its use as a government building and not as a household (Schávelzon 1995). The best-represented contexts correspond to the eighteenth century and to the construction of the building, together with a tunnel system. These tunnels, excavated in the earth, are small in dimension and cross at a point where in 1879, Benoit had made a large drainage pit using at least one of the tunnels to circulate water along a brick tubing. This system was connected with a large cistern that was torn down in 1960. The floor of the tunnels contained ceramic artifacts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the situation in the interior was so precarious that we were able to survey only a few meters. They were narrow, had very low vaults, and were clearly meant to be used only in case of an emergency.

The lateral patios of the cabildo, on Hipólito Irigoyen Street (old Victoria Street), were described earlier in this chapter, but they had little to do with the actual building. In the rest of the surface, modern constructions, particularly those built in 1960, have destroyed the subsoil several meters deep, making it impossible to locate further archaeological evidence.

Cultural material was scarce and varied, very different from the domestic contexts excavated elsewhere in the city, with a sound presence of Spanish types of the eighteenth century (16.98%), and English ones such as Creamware, Pearlware, and Whiteware (19.27%). On the other hand, and in relation with other sites, the amount of local ceramics is remarkable, as the criollo and Indian types combined climbed to almost 35% of the total. The presence of these modest types have been attributed to the convicts of the prison and are very different from those used for the elegant ceremonies held at the cabildo. But, in absolute figures, the excavation performed at the cabildo yielded a poor total of merely 524 ceramic fragments, all types included, something to be taken into consideration when making comparisons with other sites, even where much smaller surfaces were excavated. For instance, the excavation of one single structure in Balcarce 433, four blocks away,

yielded 5,811 ceramic fragments (Figure 29b). Could the lesser amount of objects found be explained because the only people that lived there permanently were the convicts and a doorkeeper? This might well be the answer.

As to the changing process urban space suffered in that section, it was slower than that of residential areas but equally intense. At first, the lot was actually an empty terrain, later the first cabildo was built there, and in a twelve-year time period the state of the structure was deplorable; it would only be sporadically used and permanently enhanced, modified and changed for the following one hundred years. After all these efforts it was demolished, and the new cabildo was very slowly built and partially finished in 1745, although works continued until almost the Independence days. After 1820 it gradually begun to deteriorate, and was remodeled in 1879; ten years later demolition works took place and it was later restored, a work that would only be completed in 1982, when the houses standing at Irigoyen Street were torn down. Another example of what has repeatedly been observed before: a process of alterations, abandonment, demolition, and new construction that, due to a lack of adequate maintenance, would deteriorate again. This would seem to be a pattern in the porteño society.

A SECRET PROJECT: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TUNNELS UNDER BUENOS AIRES

Buenos Aires is an indefensible settlement, as are many other cities in Latin America: even though the access from the river is difficult due to the shallowness of it, the city stands in a plain with little differences of level and no forests, and it never had a wall with gates or a defense system of forts. It has always been an unprotected city, whose security depended on a weak fort with cannons prepared to shoot only toward the river, as the remaining three sides were occupied by the village. At times, attempts would be made to detach garrisons, powder houses, or to create guarded areas, but nothing ever worked as a consistent system. The weakness of protective measures became evident with the 1806 and 1807 English invasions (Figure 6).

Long before this, the Jesuits had planned a first defensive mechanism based on a simple network of tunnels that would connect, underground, the most significant buildings, allowing the escape or the movement of small troops. This system would work together with the one established by Joseph Martínez de Salazar in 1671, which was also built to evacuate the city in case of an attack, to allow people to take

refuge in a fort that actually would never be completed at the front bank of the Luján River (Schávelzon 1989). The Jesuits were in charge of this project, together with many other outstanding works of public architecture carried out in the city: the cabildo, San Ignacio with its convent and school, or the residence for men with its church in San Telmo, among others, as also the Ranchería, the mission's proctorship, and churches such as La Merced or El Pilar. Although this was an ambitious project, it did not have to be so complicated if the construction of tunnels had been made section by section, at the same time that structures were being built. Later it would have only been a matter of excavating and connecting the missing sections between the buildings. The project was handled with relative secrecy, as it was rather difficult to keep it completely confidential in such a small village, where every movement of slaves or workers was immediately noticed. Builders had some experience in underground works, since 1667 some of them had been building silos to store grain in the fort, aljibes were common, and so were the cisterns, truly huge underground spaces. Also, the one or two households with basements since the seventeenth century had also been a source of additional experience. The oldest document related to this kind of work mentions they were undertaken for the first time around 1710 (Schávelzon 1992a:71).

This network of tunnels has only been partially studied for two main reasons: it was never completed as such, and time has caused severe damage. The expulsion of the Jesuits resulted in the abandonment of works, and the tunnels were cast into oblivion, becoming a part of urban mythology whenever one section or another was accidentally discovered. In turn, portions of them have been reused for varied purposes: in one occasion, when authorities tried to excavate new tunnels during the English invasions of 1806 and later, they proved useful as drainage pits, basements, and the like. The only two sections that have been preserved and studied are those located under the Manzana de las Luces (Greslebin 1969) and under the cabildo (Schávelzon 1995). The tunnel's routing shows they were meant to touch each other, though this never happened. With time, both sections suffered changes, when at the beginning of this century, in one case, the Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires was inaugurated above one of them and in the other, when the headquarters for the Comisión Nacional de Museos, Monumentos y Lugares Históricos was built in 1960 (Figure 34).

Tunnels were very primitively excavated in the ground in the so-called *tosca,* this is to say the clayish compact stratum forming the subsoil of the city. This stratum is adequate for an excavation, being rigid enough to dig in it at a short distance of the surface. In the case of the

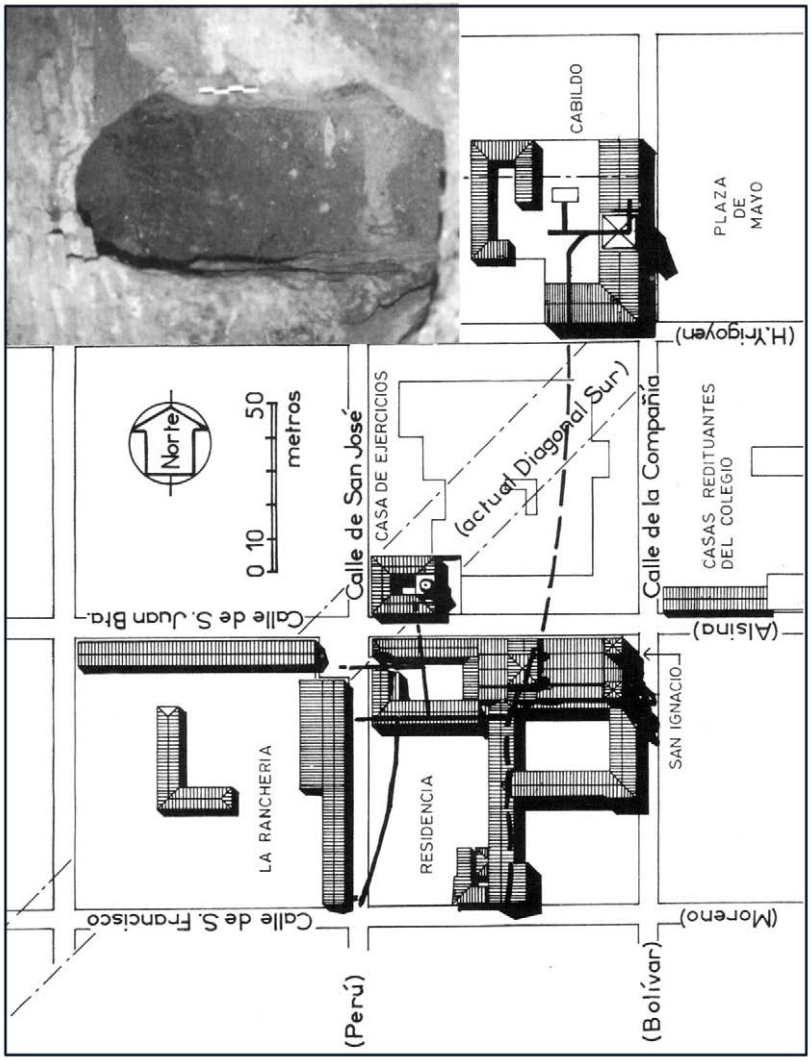

Figure 34. Oldest tunnel network in the city (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries): fully built sections (unbroken line) and unfinished sections (dotted line) connecting the structures built by Jesuit architects (based on a drawing by Alberto de Paula).

very narrow cabildo tunnels, being 50 cm wide and 1.25 meters high, people could only pass through if they crouched. In the case of the Manzana de las Luces it would appear there were two different constructive times: one with an irregular design that obviously was intended to avoid foundations, and another one perfectly straight, with sections 2 meters high. Considering that we know the initial plan for the tunnels was simultaneous with the construction of the church around 1710, we have interpreted this to be a result of the need to dig tunnels under already existing buildings, so that they had to be adapted to those buildings, a situation different from that of those excavated simultaneously with the construction of the big churches.

To this date, only these two sections of the original network have been found and surveyed; however, there are references of other sections that have been destroyed. There were many explanations about their function, and historiography repeatedly mentions the issue of contraband. The archaeological survey allowed us to differentiate the Jesuitic network from other later works, by observing they had no access to the river, as was previously thought, and that there was not enough room to move merchandise in their interior. In fact, they were part of an unconcluded defense system for escaping, very uncomfortably though, and it was inadequate for the passage of a large crowd, as the inside was poorly ventilated and the place was, in general, unpleasant.

During these studies other underground structures were spotted, and by means of the archaeological materials, the study of construction techniques, and the help of historic documents previously revised, we were able to differentiate the great variety of works existing in the underground. Most of them correspond to the nineteenth century and the most important ones were built for draining water, as is the case of the Tercero del Sur tunnel, described later. Others were basements, water wells, cisterns for aljibes, warehouses, circulations laid for water, charcoal or wires from the early industries, drainage pits or even big drainage chambers, wine cellars, or cellars where preserves or meat were stored. The main mistake committed in the past derived from the analysis and interpretation of these underground constructions as if they all were a part of one and the same huge network.

THE JESUITS' RESIDENCY FOR MEN IN SAN TELMO

One of the most significant works in the expansion of Buenos Aires out of the initial urban plan has been the Residencia and Casa de Ejercicios Espirituales the Jesuits built at the Alto de San Telmo, with

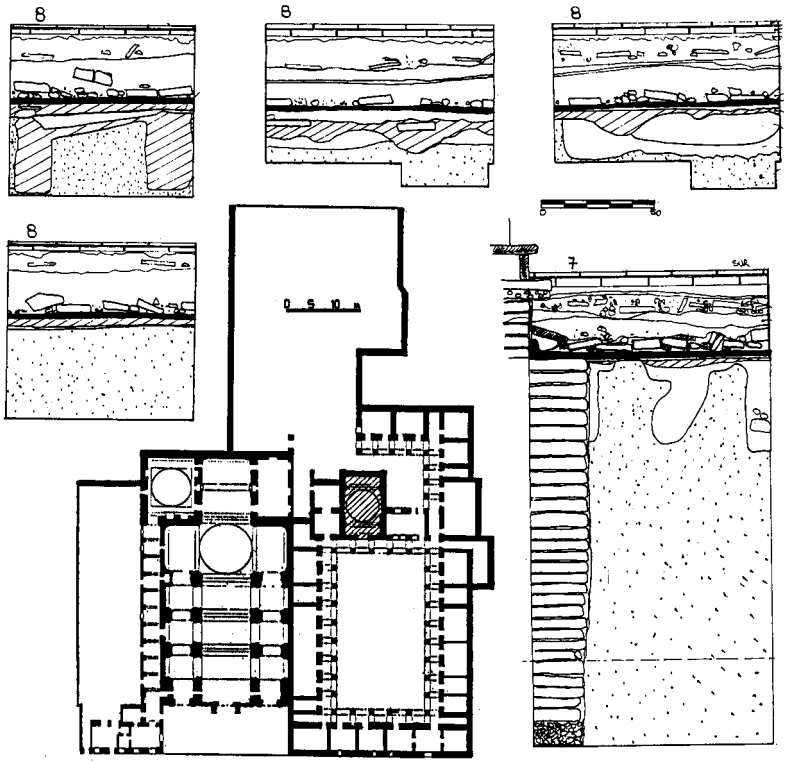

Figure 35. Excavations at the San Telmo church and residency: plan of the original architecture that still stands. Stratigraphies made inside the Chapel of Belén show a layer that corresponded to the original floor (unbroken lines) of a Jesuit blacksmith's workshop around 1740 (oblique lines), together with objects that were forged in the blacksmith's workshop found under the chapel (facing page) (based on a plan by Alberto de Paula).

its additional church and chapel (Figures 2 and 35). That area was a part of the ejido or community land, and there were no settlements duly established until the early eighteenth century, when the land began to be illegally sold or appropriated. In 1732 the Jesuits were granted a donation of lots where they could build a church and its convent; two years later, the order's architect Andrés Blanqui, one of the best-known builders of those times, was commissioned to draw the plans of an imposing group of buildings that was supposed to occupy two entire blocks. Blanqui had a sound background: he had worked on the cabildo, La Merced, and San Ignacio in Buenos Aires. Considering this was the first and, for a long time, the sole church to be built in the

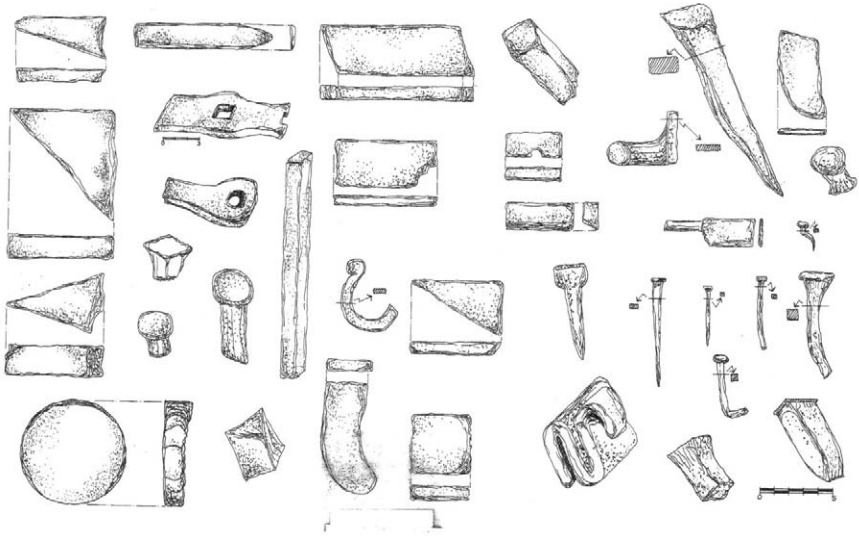

Figure 35 (cont.)

new neighborhood, construction, hopefully, was expected to be concluded quickly.

But Blanqui finally was unable to take charge of this construction, so the services of another prestiged architect, Brother Prímoli, were requested, precisely when Prímoli was building the church of Sao Miguel at the Missions, now Brazilian territory. Prímoli started work in 1735 and was replaced in 1737 by Brother José Schmidt, from Baviera (Furlong 1946). In those years the decision was made to add a school, and by 1746 this requisition was fulfilled. The Casa de Ejercicios was built in the decade of the 1740s thanks to additional private fundings. In 1745, another architect, Antonio Masella, joined the team; he was to take Schmidt's place because he was ill and actually passed away during the construction work. Unfortunately, and having reached a very advanced stage, works in the monumental building were interrupted with the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767. Construction work was completed, as years went by, with the participation of several other architects. Following the abandonment that resulted from the expulsion of the Jesuits, in 1768 the Bethlemits took charge of the group building a hospital in the section formerly occupied by the residencia, and what once was the Casa de Ejercicios was replaced by a prison for women, which functioned until 1978. Prior to this, the space had been used as an army barracks, an ammunition depot, and a warehouse, respectively. Modifications made both inside and to the facade have been

so intense that they almost made the original building unrecognizable; as to the school, it has been totally demolished.

Archaeological excavations were focused on the old chapel and the patio of the Casa de Ejercicios Espirituales. The patio showed the sequence of changes to which it was exposed throughout two centuries, including shutting the aljibe's pit, which was sealed once more in 1992 after its discovery. The gallery presents at least four different construction stages, and as a consequence the level of the original floor was raised more than 70 cm from the original one.

Excavations carried out in the interior of the chapel yielded most interesting results: first, the level of the original floor from the early eighteenth century was found, a brick pavement at a depth of 42 cm, below another floor made of French imported tiles and dated by 1820–30 (Figure 34). In one section that leaned on the northeast angle, a collective burial was discovered containing three female skeletons. These were two female infants, one seven years old and the other twelve, and the third an unborn female, all three with osteological evidence of death by starvation. We wonder why these three female infants deceased by starvation, were buried in the chapel of a residency that was exclusively for men, with no coffins and not a single reference. Evidence shows the burials were subsequent to the constructive work of the building and probably also subsequent to the expulsion of the Jesuits.

Other operation units led to the discovery of what we have interpreted as a forge or blacksmith's workshop associated with the constructive works of the church. Under the floor, a very extended layer of rust appeared to contain iron cutters, horseshoes, sections of fences, nails, hooks, knives, and a variety of plates irregularly cut. All of the findings appear to have been forged on the spot, as these items constituted fragments thrown away among the mass of rust. In addition, this group was mixed with charcoal and melted copper cores. A pattern of log holes refilled with earth, rubbish, and rust were also found; probably these were the supports of a working table, or a blower, before the chapel was finished. Ceramic materials associated with the blacksmith's workshop were composed only of earthenware jars. When the forge closed, a thick earthen subsoil of clean mud was lain, with a perfect level surface, above which the brick paving was subsequently applied (Figure 34).

In short, these huge groups built during the eighteenth century have had a complex history: for more than one hundred years, everyone involved in the project did their best to have the works completed, while buildings were constantly being used for different functions. After the first monks used it as a convent and as a school it was subse-

quently changed into a hospital, military barracks, university, proctorship, weapons storage facility, women's penitentiary, and presently houses a penitentiary institute and a museum, yet other sections have been torn down. All of this happened in a period of less than two and a half centuries. We pose ourselves the question whether those benefactors that in 1732 granted the initial funding "for the spiritual benefit of the many people who live here [in the neighborhood]" (de Paula 1984) were profoundly mistaken as to what society really wanted, or if on the contrary, the city and its population underwent such a violent change that three generations later no one any longer considered what was the most convenient destiny for the group of buildings.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN PUBLIC SPACES: PARKS AND PLAZAS IN THE CITY

A small surface in Buenos Aires is free of buildings: basically, these areas are composed of several parks and many plazas from the nineteenth century. Others, however, go far back in time, to the sixteenth century in a few cases. Based on the importance these had in the structuring of the city and the community life, a number of archaeological explorations were planned for three important parks in town, namely Lezama, Patricios, and Palermo, intended to help reconstruct their history and to provide, at the same time, some specific answers to the hypotheses brought forth about the changes on the way they were used, both in the past and today In the case of the plazas we wanted to determine: (1) whether any cultural material existed on the surface that could help locate the first seat of Buenos Aires (1536–41); and (2) whether plazas were also affected by the same intense process of change suffered by architecture.

Palermo is the most significant park in the city with a history that goes back to the seventeenth century, when it was used only as pasture grounds, mainly because they were marginal and unattractive lands. It has been mentioned before, the Caserón de Rosas since the eighteenth century had been divided into lots and thereafter sold, leaving aside the fact that it was actually royal property. In the early nineteenth century the entire zone was split among different owners, and Rosas bought parcel after parcel until he became an important landowner. He ordered refill works to avoid floods, developed gardening, landscaping, plantations, lakes and channels, providing also for recreational areas, everything with the special collaboration of engineer Nicolás Descalzi. After Rosas was defeated in combat in 1852, the park was abandoned,

although recreational areas were still visited, until president Nicolás Avellaneda, in 1873, transformed the entire surface into the Parque Tres de Febrero, though it is still called Palermo. Since then, a number of different enterprises and works were undertaken, in a sequence that came to an end in 1900 with the new landscape made by the Frenchman Carlos Thays, who made the central portion of the park exactly what it is today.

Surface studies have shown a park with no expressions of historicity; those who walk around, will not find anything that would indicate an age older than the latter years of the nineteenth century. The design, the monuments, and their architecture, the topography, and even the cultural materials recovered in surface collections all point toward a magnificent work, built and used in the twentieth century, with a particular intensity in the earlier days. However, a more careful observation allows us to identify a few older traits: there are alignments of trees that indicate former trails and water courses, part of an old electric factory and one of the old ponds, all of which are evidence of works of the midnineteenth century, but there is nothing else that would show an older age of the site. To make things worse, many of the most significant architectural works have been torn down: the Hansen Caffee, the Pabellón de los Lagos, the railway station, the Caserón de Rosas, and the administration office. Surface collection has not provided one fragment from before the early nineteenth century. The oldest evidence found corresponds to the Creamware type, which represents only 1.1% of the total; Pearlware amounts to 7.9%, and Whitewares climb to 70.4%, with important percentages of stoneware (11%) and European porcelain (6%) (Malbrán and Lanza 1997). From the chronological point of view this would reconfirm the profound changes that occurred during the first half of the nineteenth century, and from the social point of view, the quality of materials indicate a social group of high-purchase capacity and selective lifestyle. Stonewares are present with a small amount of gin-case bottles (9.1%) and plenty of bottles of beer (62.9%), and there is an important presence of grease bottles for hairdressing (10.2%) and inkpots (8%). When comparing this information with the data from other plazas in the city, we see figures are higher (Schávelzon 1994:91) (Figure 36).

As to Parque Lezama, we observed on the present surface the former existance of a large number of buildings of a varied nature: one school, some households, a bull ring, bars, one restaurant, several pergolas, a number of street newsstands and bookstores, and some sculptures (Schávelzon 1992b); everything having been torn down a few years after it was built. This constant process of change has not only altered the space but also the subsoil—something that has been ob-

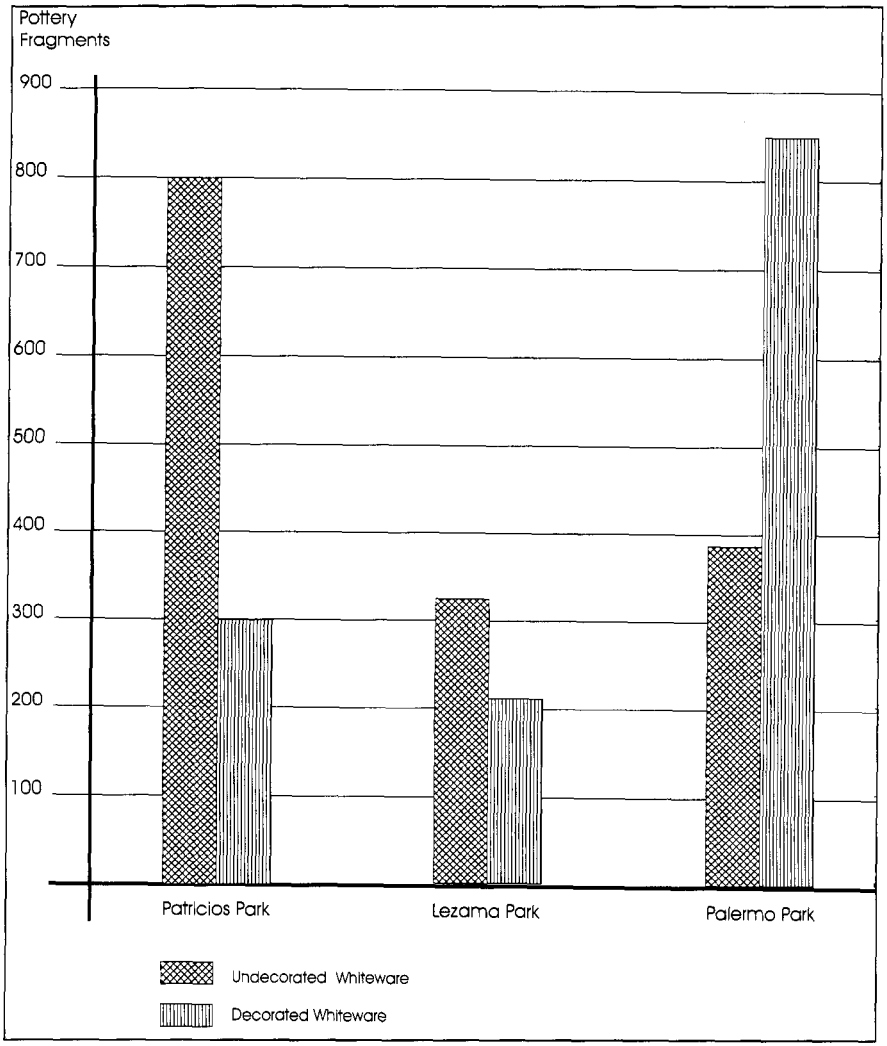

Figure 36. Different preferences between Decorated and Undecorated Refined Whitewares in three parks in the city used by the lower social classes (Patricios), the middle classes (Lezama), and the upper social classes (Palermo) during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries (Malbrán and Lanza 1996).

served during the excavations—and is expressed in the remarkable presence of building materials (19.3%, leaving bricks aside). In this case artifacts are older than those recovered in Palermo; mayolicas from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have also been found

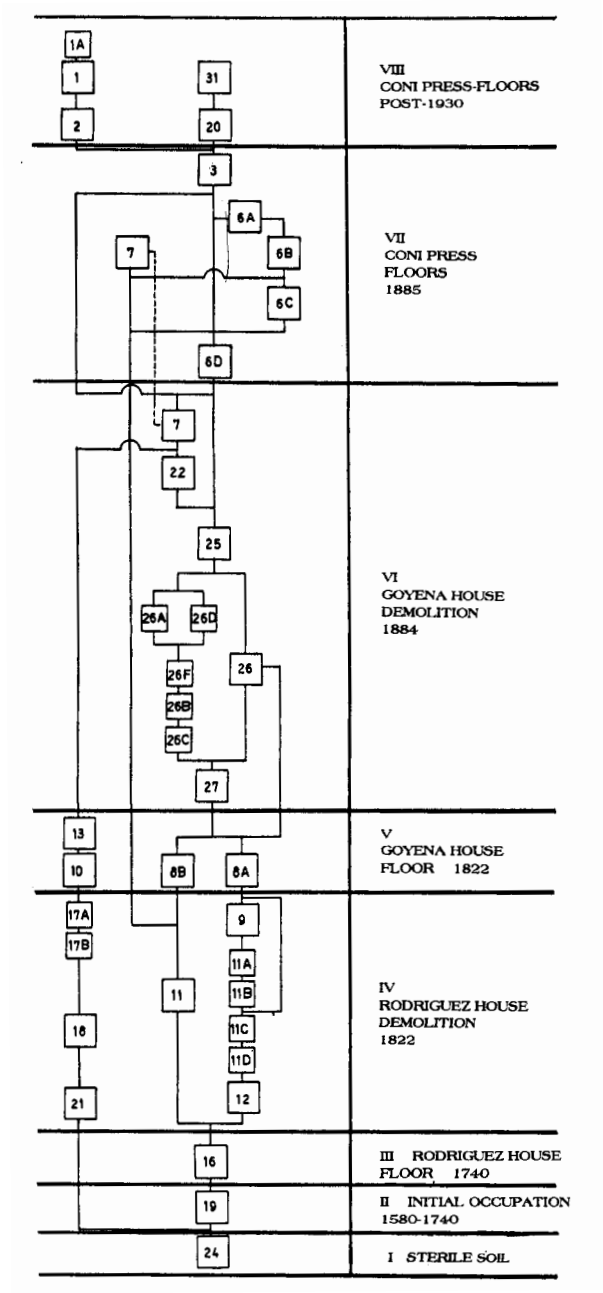

Figure 37. Harris matrix of the building sequence and changes in the lot of the Coni Press throughout four centuries.

on the surface. The percentage of Creamware, even though low (2.7%), doubles that of Palermo; Pearlware also climbs to more than double. Lezama has been more intensely used throughout colonial times than Palermo, as it was located halfway between the Riachuelo's port and the downtown area. In excavations, the remains of an old eighteenth-century powder house and a household were reported; the house was the property of the Barriles family and has been described elsewhere in this book.

At the south end of the city, surface collections have been performed in the plazas Garay, Ameghino, Uriburu, España, Nicaragua, and at Parque Patricios. The history of these plazas is similar to that of the parks described above, in the sense of an endless process of construction and demolition that swept away the cemetery that once existed in Plaza España, and the large slaughterhouse of the city in Parque Patricios. Due perhaps to the similarity of these processes, percentages in the presence of cultural materials are quite the same: Creamwares represent from 0% to 2.8%, Pearlware from 0% to 7.5% and Whiteware, a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 55.8%. Stoneware goes from 1.4% to 6.1% with the exception of the Parque Patricios site, where it reaches 20.2%, duplicating findings in Palermo and with a majority of beer containers probably related to the slaughterhouse workers. Porcelain, which in this case is an indicator of a late chronology and not of economic resources, ranges from 5.7% to 29.4%. In short, Creamware shows an average presence of less than 1%, Pearlware less than 4%, and Whiteware amounts to nearly 50%; stoneware is represented by 7% and porcelain, by 17% (Malbrán and Lanza 1997) (Figure 36).

This comparison between plazas located at the edge of the historic district with others placed outside of it allows us to conclude that the distribution of cultural materials on the surface is relatively homogeneous, and that tendency seems to be similar in the entire city: an almost total lack of them prior to the eighteenth century, a slight presence in the first half of the nineteenth century, and since then, a strong dynamics of construction and demolition events. The type of objects used, at least concerning ceramics and glass, does not differ from others found in former excavations inside buildings or in garbage pits in the city.

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4

"To Be or Not to Be (European-Like)"

The Archaeology of Ethnicity and Gender

In the preceding pages we have seen that society in Buenos Aires has been, from the very moment of its foundation, ethnically multiple. As time elapsed, the crossing of ethnic groups became even more dynamic, although the white population always prevailed. Local bibliography refers, much too often, to three basic racial groups: the white, the black, and the Indians. Leaving aside the fact that this way of thinking is very much full of racism, reality was quite different: locally, the three main groups were formed by the Europeans and their white descendants, the Africans and the natives, and none of these groups were homogeneous. Europe was represented by Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Walloons, Flemish, Irish, and Germans, among others; by Jewish emigrants from far away places in central Europe who left their home lands through Spain; and finally by the criollos or whites born in this continent. Consequently, there never was such a thing as an ethnically homogeneous population, although, actually, it was mostly white. Africans did not come from one and the same region, culture, or language and still other slaves were brought from regions such as Ceylon, or were either Hindus or Mussulmans. In the region, the Querandíes were all Pampean Indians, while the Chanás and the Guaraníes were cultures from the forest that did not share either their language or their culture (Figure 38).

Since the seventeenth century, the Araucanians from Chile had broken into the vicinity of Buenos Aires, forcing the traditional Tehuelches to the south and causing a major ethnic change near the city's borders. It was there that a strongly mixed population was settled, composed of fugitive Africans who were usually accepted by native communities, white people, and mestizos who had escaped from serving at the frontier's armies, or plainly from justice. If we add to this list all those white men that lived in the tolderías as captives or as volunteers, the resulting mosaic of different groups is certainly surprising. The capture of "chinas and Indians," who were later distributed among city families for reeducation in a hidden form of slavery, was common

Figure 38. Immigrants from Eastern and Western Europe together with the descendants of Indians and Africans at the port, around 1865, wearing Swedish wooden shoes, fiber sandals, common footware, boots, and plain sandals or going simply barefoot, according to their different origins, with the catch of the day (photo by Witcomb, Archives of the CAU).

in the city until the late nineteenth century, and it was also common for families to give soldiers cash rewards for the delivery of captives, so both parties would benefit.

Observing in perspective the ethnic mosaic of the population, only two social groups will clearly come forth: one, composed of European, Catholic, white people, who would not do the *trabajo vil.* This means the language spoken was not important, as long as rules of work division inherited from the Middle Ages were respected; doing any sort of work with the hands was synonymous of an inferior class. The second included the rest of the people, no matter what color of skin they were or what language they spoke, or what religion they practiced. They were the ones that actually produced by means of primary activities: cultivating the fields, raising cattle, working as a carpenter, a miller, a blacksmith, and often even as a craftsman or an artist. Up until the early nineteenth century, the ideals of the noble gentleman were centered in the devotion and the rituals derived from belonging to an exclusive group; everything else was but a mere materiality of production, a mat-

ter for servants born to do such things, or forced to play that role by divine destiny. The Jesuit José Claussner wrote, as late as 1719, that at that time "Spaniards were not too fond of working with their hands, and therefore, they leave that kind of work to foreigners" (Muhn 1946:23). By the eighteenth century, society had become a little more flexible, and a good number of white criollos became dedicated to sewing or working with leather or wood. Liberal professions were socially acceptable and practiced mostly by foreigners. Father José Cardiel, in 1747, wrote:

> They are all traders, and here, for doing this, one is not less a noble. Many changes can be seen: a ship boy would come, a calker, a sailor, a mason or a ship carpenter. He would start to work here same as he did in his home country (for the astonishment of people of this land, who are not used to that much), and would build houses, ships, work as carpenters, sawing all day long. . . . In a few months time one can see that with his industry and work he has made some money: he then travels to Europe taking with him *yerba* or fabrics, to Chile or Potosí. By the time he returns he already is a man of fortune; he makes a second trip, and now one can see him as a gentleman, dressed in silks, wearing braids, a gala sword and a wig. . . and we later see he has become a royal officer, a treasurer or a mayor (Furlong 1938:49).

The social system was extremely permeable for Europeans or white people; but now and then when a mulata was seen in the city dressed as a lady, people would be shocked (Romero 1976). The same would happen in the sixteenth century at the sight of some Spaniards who were compelled to work in the fields because they risked starvation and had no other choice. Being a trader or a real estate owner was considered fit work for a gentleman, and contraband and corruption were also socially acceptable, as both things were looked at as necessities derived from the local situation; all other works were *viles,* that is, servile, abject, only for servants.

The most accurate descriptions of the way of thinking of the local upper classes are found in writings of foreigners, mainly from central Europe, people who were used to doing all kinds of handiwork: in 1727, Brother Miguel Herre wrote a letter stating:

> [In] this part of the New World all those people coming from Spain are considered as nobles, that is to say, all the white; they are distinguished from others for their language, their costumes, but not for their maintenance or their dwellings, which are those of beggers; however, they won't leave aside their conceit and arrogance; they despise the arts; he who has a knowledge or works with pleasure is despised as a slave (Muhn 1946:41).

This attitude left a strong mark in society, and no doubt was one of the main reasons for the failure of the first Buenos Aires founded by Pedro de Mendoza. The possibility that those arts and crafts were practiced

by white people, and that they were at the same time compatible with the social status of a white, was not seriously considered until the changes brought forth by the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century, and would only be discussed in depth at the beginning of the following century (Martínez 1967).

It would be difficult to determine which was the social group that suffered the most during the centuries of colonial domination. Natives were expelled, forced to work in estancias, or simply terminated. Africans and their descendants had been torn from their lands and forced to serve in this different world; they would at times get their freedom, be fortunate enough to work for city families, or become recognized craftsmen, though they would never be entitled to become members of a guild. Marrying with a white or with a blended white constituted the best mechanism of social promotion, and even though this mixing did not allow one to make any progress in the social scale, it did at least allow for a somewhat better life.

THE INDIAN PRESENCE

The Indian population in the city was small, not only because natives had taken refuge in the open country, as was the case in the earlier days, but because, actually, they were small in number. There are no conclusive reports on the number of members of the different communities settled in the desierto. We may assume that the percentage of Indians and mestizos together of the total urban population could reach from 5% to 10%, dropping to zero by the midnineteenth century. In 1601 the percentage of pure blood Indians was 8.87%, by 1726 it was only 3%, by 1744 there were 1.62%, and by 1778, in the city and the campaña, there were but 2.24%. However, these figures differ greatly from those of other regions in the country. For instance, in 1673, Buenos Aires had 26 encomiendas with 354 natives; in 1582, Santiago del Estero had only 48 vecinos in charge of 12,000 Indians, and a century later, that city still had 34 encomiendas and 3,358 Indians (Assadourian, Beato, and Chiaramonte 1992).

The demographic reduction of the native population in the region was extremely sudden, much more than in the country as a whole; by 1776 they still represented 63.5% of the total; in 1869 that figure dropped to 10%, and by 1895 to a 4.3% (Martinez Sarasola 1992). Female Indians and mulatas were still being used for domestic services, and only since 1860 and as a total novelty, white, humble women began to be hired, specifically Irish female immigrants, for those positions. Interestingly, in the earlier days of the city and since the very moment

Garay made his repartimiento, the multiethnical character of Indian groups became evident: the Pampas, Querandíes, Guaranies, Chaná were all intertwined during the earlier days, speaking different languages and coming from different cultures. Even though for the late seventeenth century the Indian presence was represented mostly by the Pampas and the Guaraníes, history has shown the permanent movement of many other groups. A good example of this would be the transfer from Uruguay of 500 Charrúas, ordered in 1624 by Governor Céspedes, who were to work at the fort in Buenos Aires (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Indians in the city: by the early nineteenth century, they still approached some stores to sell skins, feather dusters, or leather harnesses for horses. Painting by Carlos Morel around 1840 (Archives of the CAU).

With time, the Indian presence in the city changed: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was quite common to see them there, as they were a part of everyday life. In the eighteenth century they already were strangers to urban life; they would be seen at daylight selling partridges and other small animals, but with nightfall they disappeared. Around the nineteenth century, the image of the *indio malo,* the mean Indian, began to prevail, and since that time they have been portrayed as kidnappers and killers, no longer the tame and quiet people they used to be. Besides the reduction in their number, they became looked down on and ill treated in urban centers. By 1860, a writer made the following description of a street situation:

> [S]ome Patagonic indians have been promenading in our streets, exhibiting their vigorous brass limbs, poorly covered with furs, for the astonishment of those who saw them in such looks, with no signs of feeling cold. Women were scared before those men of such a stature and fierce look, indifferent as they seemed to their entourage. . . . As long as they do not think about going to the theater, in the wrong belief that this being a free country, no one will stop them from entering (Cantilo 1864–68-II:411).

Not long before, English traveler William McCann had made the following description of the city market:

> This market causes in foreigners who visit for the first time a feeling of great surprise; the variety of types and costumes, among which one finds representatives of all races and countries, together with the Babel of tongues from every nation in the world, confuses the spectator to an extent hard to explain. Certainly, no other city in the world can exhibit such an incredible concourse of people; the variety in their faces is so remarkable that one is tempted to doubt human kind comes from a single origin: Spaniards' olive complexion, the jaundiced skin of the French and the reddish of the English, alternate with the Indian, Tartar, Jewish and black features; women as white as lilies and of a radiant beauty, contrast with others, as black as the night, while appearances and costumes of the different social classes contribute no less to the confusion (McCann 1969:128–129).

Archaeology has made evident the Indian and mestizo presence through the effective existence of ceramic types and/or contexts, produced and maybe used by each social group. Indian ceramics are characterized by a sophisticated changing process: on one hand, they show a continuity in shapes, manufacturing techniques, and decoration that persists between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Even though those ceramics were probably not produced in the city, they still were used and are common to all excavated contexts. On the other hand, a group called Cerámica Monocroma Roja, in the early seventeenth century, started to adapt to new functions. Both in Buenos Aires and its twin city Santa Fe la Vieja where the most outstanding collections are

found, dishes, bowls, canteens, and botijas have been often manufactured without a lathe and then painted in red, a habit that persisted until the following century. We have found dishes with a flat base imitating Creamwares that were manufactured in this Indian pottery tradition.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, another ceramic of a similar tradition commonly appeared in Buenos Aires: the Monocroma Roja Pulida, formerly called *engobada,* which respects the tradition of Indian pastes, is manufactured with a lathe and imitates many Spanish shapes but mainly, it tries to reproduce the European glazings through a very systematic polishing that produces very shiny pieces.

The ceramics we call criollas are those types that keep a number of Indian traditions, be it in its manufacturing, pasting, firing, or shape, but which at the same time are extremely mixed with African forms or European functions: earthen jars, candleholders, cups, glasses, bottles and botijas, so popular between the seventeenth and the midnineteenth centuries.

The presence of Indian ceramics was seen in a minor proportion in relation to European products: between the seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, it would gradually decrease from a maximum of 20% to zero in family or humble contexts or in working places, as the ones we have described so far. Among the wealthy families where ceramic amounted to nearly 10%, mainly used by the servants and in the kitchen, the average remained the same up until the midnineteenth century, when it disappears.

THE AFRICAN PRESENCE

Archaeology of nonaboriginal ethnic minorities in Argentina was nonexistent. Although some historic bibliography is available on Africans and their descendants (Torre Revello 1940; Andrews 1980; Ortiz Oderigo 1974; Rodriguez Molas 1958), we must point out that presently there is no Afro-Argentine population in Buenos Aires with the exception of new immigrants from Brazil or the Cape Verde Islands. To history, relevance of the African presence is recent, and the issue is not easy to deal with due to the racist burden it bears. As a consequence of the image traditional history has promoted of a white racial population, average people do not have the slightest idea that prior to the great European immigration of the late nineteenth century, Africans were a part of the local ethnic composition. Besides, no excavations have been conducted in sites that were specifically occupied by Africans until the 1997 works performed in the Ezcurra house.

Actually, there has been an African population since Buenos Aires's inception, as Pedro de Mendoza had brought slaves with him. Throughout the following two centuries, the arrival of African slaves was common, even though they did not come regularly, in particular during the first fifty years, due to regulations that prohibited the entrance of slaves through the port. The exact number of the purely black population and of the mixed groups that derived from them is hard to establish, as statistics are feeble on one hand, and on the other, because officials in charge of censuses would classify citizens in a totally arbitrary way. How could one determine precise limits between a black man, a moreno, and a mulato after several generations of interethnicity with both the Indian and the criollo population? In addition, the color of the skin varied, depending on where the slaves had been brought from. When we statistically combine all these different groups we can conclude that by the second half of the eighteenth century, colored people comprised 25% to 30% of the total population. By 1744 there were in the city 1,150 black people, 330 mulatos, and 221 pardos, thus totaling 16.91%; in 1778 there was a total of 6,835 Afro-Argentines all groups included, averaging 28.38%. The growth in thirty-four years had been remarkable, over 300%, though the proportion with the rest of the inhabitants remained the same (Ravignani 1919). In a study based on the 1744 census, it appears that 37% of families in the city had slaves, mostly devoted to domestic works. Of these families 52.10% owned only one or two, and 11.8% had between ten and twenty slaves (Guerín et al. 1988).

Information is less accurate for the earlier times: between 1597 and 1607, 5,639 slaves had entered into the territory. Between 1606 and 1625, 13,678 Africans were confiscated for having been illegally introduced in the region from Brazil, and by 1680 the number amounted to 22,892. Between 1702 and 1714 the Compañía Real de Guinea brought 3,475 *heads.* (Slaves were referred to as if they were cattle.) Many of them were further taken to Chile or Perú while others were left in intermediary cities such as Córdoba or Tucumán (Torre Revello 1940).

Africans brought to these shores did not share a common culture nor a single language that would contribute to their intercommunication. They were coming from the coastal or central-coastal areas of Africa, depending on the time of the year they were captured. This is why historic documents outline the differences between the *congos* (Cameroon and Congo), the *benguelas* (from Angola), the *cafres* (from Mozambique and Madagascar), the *mandingas* (from Guinea), and many others (Rout 1976). These communities, in turn, created their own societies and community groups for self-assistance, which had some relevance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even though white

people considered black people as a unit that comprised them all, with no differences between them, this was not so for Afro-Argentines.

In the colonial society, the allocation of slaves was absolutely different from that of Brazil or the United States, which was based on plantation systems. Although a high proportion of them were put to work in the country to replace the ever lacking Indian labor, another important percentage were left in the city as domestic servants and workshop laborers, masons and even as craftsmen or silversmiths (Figure 40). It

Figure 40. Drawing, by an unknown artist, showing a typical domestic scene: a young Afro-Argentine male pouring mate for the lady of the house; she is sitting down and he stands up, in a ritual that used to take several hours a day.

was common for them to be rented out to work as semispecilized laborers, and eventually they could look for a job of their own, from which any salary they earned would be turned over to their masters. In patrician families, servants would spend the night within the main house, at the *patio del fondo* or backyard, where there were rooms prepared for them. This shows a quite flexible structure of social functioning, or at least a much less rigid functioning than in other regions of the continent. This has facilitated a remarkable crossing of groups and has actually helped slaves to buy their own freedom; often, some of them who were devoted to craftworks achieved important positions because of the quality of their works. In 1726, Father Cattaneo stated that people "had to turn to the Moor or the black, who as I said before are the ones who do all the work, and they train in such a manner that presently, they are themselves magnificent teachers" (Furlong 1946b). In memoirs written by members of wealthy families, we frequently see that children were raised in close relation to the servants and that they played and spent long periods of time in the servants' quarters. The ladies of the house, in turn, always had at hand a *negrita del coscorrón,* to slap them whenever they were nervous or angry for any reason. Other slave girls wore their hair in a long braid so that ladies could pull their hair whenever they were in a bad mood, and there were still others who were to serve the mate on their knees (Torre Revello 1940:161).

Apparently, one of the reasons why slaves from Buenos Aires were well treated in relation to other regions had to do with their price. At first the state prohibited the entrance of slaves, and later the city was authorized to receive them, but only in transit: prices were very high, sometimes three or four times higher than elsewhere in the continent. By 1610, a young male cost $500; a couple with one daughter cost $700, even though the chance existed to obtain a slave for $250, depending on their age, skills, and physical conditions. But, an urban lot cost $300, a quarter of a solar cost $80, and a ranch in the outskirts of the community land, equipment and cattle included, could be purchased for $500 (Ensink 1990). In 1610, a male from Angola, in good physical condition, cost $500, while, again, an estancia at the Salado Grande cost $100, and a quality downtown dwelling on one-quarter of a solar cost $400.

In urban households, slaves were mostly adult female and young girls who would take care of domestic labors, cooking, and serving the table; they went to the market and delivered messages among the ladies of the neighborhood. A little girl would serve the mate wherever in the house the ladies wished to drink it. In the outdoors, both male and female slaves worked as street sellers of poultry, birds, candles, feather dusters, brooms, and sweets. The role of the laundress has been

very significant in everyday life, as African women gathered to do the washing in the rocky banks of the river, just off the downtown area; the place was considered a restricted area that white people avoided.

Obviously, this social mobility between Africans and their descendants and the rest of the population, by no means signified a rupture of the inexorable racism that existed on the side of white people; it only meant slaves had more options that elsewhere. For instance, no African or mestizo was allowed to be a part of any religious association or brotherhood, so they had to create their own. Likewise they were not allowed to join the army, so they were forced to organize their own battalions. All of this was the starting point for the development and growth of the naciones or societies that grouped black people, which achieved a certain relevance in the early nineteenth century. Occasionally they were allowed to build their own chapels and to have their *tangos,* places of their own where they would dance and celebrate ceremonies (Rodríguez Molas 1957; 1958). By the midnineteenth century, there were already Afro-Argentine army officers, poets, musicians, and writers.

Life of liberated black people during colonial times was far from easy, as their social status, even though it was better than being a slave, was usually very low. In general, they inhabited the southern border of the urban center, on Chile, Independencia, México, and Estados Unidos Streets, where the varied societies that gathered them were also located.

In 1813, the Libertad de Vientres was passed, granting automatic freedom to all male and female infants born from slaves. The law was not strictly obeyed and occasionally, the parents themselves would not accept being separated from their children. This frequently created very difficult situations until 1852 when slavery was finally abolished. Although a good many slaves were liberated, again, the law was not fully complied with, and other work organizations were created, which actually perpetuated the system of a compulsory subordination until the twentieth century.

Even though the numeric dimension of Africans has been important, their archaeological identification, on the contrary, is hard to establish, for at least up until now there were only two specific ceramic types that fit with such a variety of heterogeneous groups. In the United States, the ceramic type known as Colono Ware has established an almost direct link between ethnic group and material culture, but in this case it is not quite that simple. Museum collections in Argentina and Uruguay have concentrated in musical instruments and iconography to the detriment of other aspects of material culture (Ortiz Oderigo 1974).

The African material culture is composed of objects from different origins: those brought directly from Africa, those locally produced following African cultural patterns, those blended with Indian traditions, and those that have been reused after being discarded by the Europeans. Among the former group there are pipes, which were particularly important for females, though pipes have been also manufactured locally with decorations of lines, triangles, and dots. In the African or Afro-Argentine contexts bone and wooden knives and scrapers are found, as are also small rounded stones for fortune-telling, blue necklace beads made of glass, carved bones used as hangers or also for fortune-telling, and round fragments of olive jars to use in different games.

During one of the excavations, we made a hideous finding: a voodoo doll, carved in wood with a bone-made thorn nailed in his heart. The doll had been strangled with a piece of wire and further buried by a lake in the Palermo park, an area that displayed a rich African tradition up until the first half of the nineteenth century. San Benito de Palermo, the tutelary saint of the zone and whose chapel has been in that place for a long time, had the devotion of the black population in the city, particularly after 1807, when he was canonized in Italy.

We found a number of ceramic fragments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, corresponding to very simple globular or cylindrical bowls with diameters ranging between 10 and 15 cm, with no decoration, often made through rolling or direct molding, with an irregular firing and evidence of fire exposure. Until recently they were identified as aboriginal or pertaining to the group of mestizo ceramics (Schávelzon 1991); now, after establishing the type of African ceramics properly differentiating those of a clearly aboriginal tradition, these pieces do not fit in any of those categories. They are remarkably similar to those discussed by Leland Ferguson (1992:85), and their design is the result of eating habits and ways of cooking similar to the Afro-American ones.

There were strong cultural traits that worked as integrating elements between the different ethnic groups that composed the *negritud,* or quality of being black, and which identified them as such—music, meals, dances, colored costumes, words in common—but at the same time there must have been an intense use of forms of culture and of objects coming from other groups. Maybe a good deal of the criollo ceramic associated with the mestizo groups was also used by pure or almost pure Africans. The same probably happened with the Buenos Aires Borde Evertido Indian pottery type.

According to what I have identified, local archaeological bibliography refers only to one site in the entire country showing evidence of an

African settlement with a cemetery: Arroyo de Leyes, in the province of Santa Fe (Aparicio 1937). For a long time it was considered a forged scenario put in place at the beginning of the twentieth century, but actually, artifacts are remarkably similar to those produced by Afro-Americans in the eastern United States. Resemblances are so extraordinary that they seem inspired in one identical extra-continental model, an issue that is bringing forward the necessity of working on an archaeology of the African diaspora in the Americas. The finding of these buried and semiburied ceramics suggests that the site could have been an Afro-Argentine cemetery, and the graves are similar to those of Alabama, Georgia, and the two Carolinas in the United States. The habit of placing objects and bottles on the coastal African tombs has been sufficiently studied and has spread widely throughout the Americas (Burrison 1983; Vlach 1990).

With the struggles for Independence, the situation of Afro-Argentines varied greatly: joining the army would turn into a possibility of being granted freedom and of becoming, simultaneously, a part of a structure that allowed them to improve their social status, if only a little. An important part of the many armies that were fighting internal as well as subsequent wars included battalions of pardos and morenos. But, for example, the war fought against Paraguay in the midnineteenth century resulted in mortality rates that resembled genocide more than war casualties.

The intense process of ethnic crossing—the ban, since 1813, against the arrival of any ships bringing new slaves and the high rate of mortality registered in wars—resulted in a sudden and permanent decrease of the African population, followed by the flood of European immigrants that occurred during the second half of that century. The first European immigration was mainly composed of unmarried men—family groups were to arrive much later—and that resulted in a high incidence of inter-racial couples with black females and mestizas, for a further whitening of the population. Liberalism, even though hard to understand, succeeded in putting an end to the Africanization of Buenos Aires and "whitened" it for the following century (Andrews 1980).

THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN

Women were a discriminated group, and so, or even more, were children, in the very rigid Spanish society. The historical presence of children is almost nonexistent in a world that seemed to be only

composed of adult males; but they were certainly there and have left traces in material culture. It is true their presence is not easily observed and that it came forth quite suddenly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but since then, the body of evidence has gradually increased. By 1850, archaeological findings show how remarkably the changes operated in the everyday life of a family

There are two groups of material evidence: toys, on one side, and objects used by children, on the other; of both, interesting examples have been reported. Toys are varied, and since our first publications about them, information has grown wider (Schávelzon 1991:163–164). At that time we had mentioned dolls with porcelain faces, *bolitas* or marbles, and the cups and dishes used for dolls' houses, so typical of Victorian times. This is to say that basically, white children of the medium or upper class played in the same way as their counterparts from central Europe: identical games, identical toys, with the difference that Europe produced the toys and local children were only users. By no means was the universe of games and toys restricted to these very few items; however, and interestingly, those archaeologically recovered were all brought from abroad. The contextuality of games is also present, as marbles were usually found among the brick paved floors, in the inside of drainage pipes, or even in blind drains, in close relation to how marbles were used to play on the floor.

Also remarkable are some recovered warlike toys, such as a little bronze cannon found at San Lorenzo 392, in a garbage pit of the Peña family refilled by the midnineteenth century. In some written memoirs of those times, it is common to find information about children that had fun imitating famous sea captains of the Independence Wars and who dressed like sailors, until World War I. Juan Bautista Alberdi, responsible for the theoretical basis of the national constitution, writes in his memoirs that he, as a child, was General Belgrano's favorite, and that "more than once I played with the little scale cannons used for the academic training of his officers" (Alberdi 1962:5).

Another group of objects is the one associated with their school activities: boards, pencils, pocketknives, inkpots and writing pens, in addition to ink containers that teachers used at school. But the time is the nineteenth century, with the educational boom derived from Sarmiento's campaign to promote free public education; as a consequence, between 1850 and 1900 there was a large incidence of these objects, as a direct result of the reduction of illiteracy and the increase of all activities that had to do with learning. The state of education in Buenos Aires, also the process of expansion of literacy throughout the century, was remarkable and almost exceptional in the Americas, only second to

those of the United States and Canada. It was a part of the process of cultural homogenization carried out simultaneously with the racial *whitening* of the population.

THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN

An extra challenge archaeology must face is to search and find women, young or grown up, who certainly lived a hard life full of deprivations and limitations of all sorts. The role they played depended first on the color of their skin, and second on their social status and wealth. A *señorita* was someone who was bound to be married to a white man, who owned a house, who had servants, and who probably never got near the kitchen or did any kind of heavy domestic work. She was expected to become a mother, go to church, establish social relations with other families in the same position, entertain and watch over appearances. The nineteenth century iconography is rich in illustrations showing these ladies drinking mate served by their negrita (Figure 39), or having a conversation during the tertulias; they are always white and well dressed, and the interiors of their home ranged from those typical of average medium to upper social classes (Figure 12).

Very different was the social status of women married to not so wealthy criollos or men of a darker skin; and needless to say, much worse was the status those of Afro-Argentines or Indians, no matter what the color of their skin was: they were bound to work without rest as washer women, street sellers, or servants, or doing ironing, preparing food that was later sold at the marketplace or the fair, or manufacturing candles, playing cards, or matches. No matter which her activity would be, hers would be a life of endless work, as a slave or a free woman, and in the best of cases, in the late eighteenth century, she might be lucky enough to own a small house should she marry a man serving in the army or a well-known craftsman. Illustrations depict these women wearing very humble dresses and worn out clothes, barefooted, buying and selling in the open air. Some would not be forced to work that much, but they had to take care of their homes, their children, and their husbands who worked from morning to night (Mallo 1990). The mestizo women, as well as the Aborigines, played an outstanding role in production of weavings, homemade alcoholic beverages, and preserves, and occasionally they were the sole providers for their homes. At the urban border the home life was one of poverty and women were the ones that had to contend with it daily. The necessary self-sufficiency of rural life imposed a very long and hard working day

to keep homes more or less provided for, with the additional production of a few goods to trade, such as eggs or vegetables.

Social distances were as wide as their everyday lives. When describing wealthy women, Xavier Marmier in 1850 wrote:

> [T]hey hardly work or learn anything. They spend the day in a comfortable indolence, carelessly dressed, hardly doing anything until the afternoon: then, they arrange their beautiful hair in braids with a great art. . . . In these outfits, they walk by the streets, visit stores, appear in their balconies or living rooms. The subjects of their conversations are—it must be said—very limited. . . . However, and after a while, one feels a sort of pleasing quietness before the ignorance of the *porteñas* (Marmier 1948:38).

And this is what Félix de Azara, another European, had to say about country women: "No need to say women wear no shoes, and roam about filthy and in tatters, just as their parents and husbands, and they do not sew or spin a thing" (Azara 1943:13). This kind of description abounds, though clothes in general were a luxurious article, sometimes more unaffordable than other indispensable goods. In the seventeenth century, a good dress cost more than a house or a lot. The repeated comment of chroniclers that with the exception of the upper class, the population was in tatters, should not be so surprising, even though they confused neglect with poverty. As French traveler Julian Mellet wrote in 1809:

> [W]omen are charming, they speak Spanish very properly and with refinement, but there is one thing that makes them even more attractive, and this is their irresistible propensity to drink and smoking tobacco (1988:65).

The English Emeric Vidal also made his contribution by stating:

> [W]omen go about barefooted and filthy. Their costumes are nothing but a shirt with no sleeves, fastened to the waist with a belt, and much too often they own but the one they are wearing (Vidal 1820:20).

Of course this corresponded to a variety of reasons: prestige, color of the skin, social status or occupation of the husbands, but no doubt the situation of women was one of total dependence and subjection. There were a few exceptions of women who found alternatives to breaking these rules and establishments, but these constituted only rare cases; one would be that of María Josefa Ezcurra, whose house has been excavated and results reported on earlier in this book. Schmidtmeyer tells of an episode about a German traveler and an eighteen-year-old Indian girl.

> [She was] dressed as a great lady, with elegant and glittering costumes totally ragged, sitting as though she was waiting for the morning visit of a court of admirers, with a delicate pale face and blond hair. Close to the girl,

> her mother and sister, of Indian or African blood, were working hard. Her parents were so proud of having a white daughter that she was considered the lady of the house: she would not work and was assisted by her sisters (Schmidtmeyer 1947:13).

These social rankings are well documented in the archaeology of the city: earrings, eardrops, rings, thimbles, needles and scissors, silver or bronze hair clips, tortoise shell ornamental hair combs, bone needles for the hair, necklace beads, little keys for jewel caskets, medals with the image of different virgins and rosaries, all objects that represent their lifestyle, showing that in spite of descriptions made by some travelers, not all women were filthy and covered with tatters. In the eighteenth century, when the general economy improved, jewels became more popular, and they were manufactured both with precious and false stones. Wealthier ladies wore silver and gold ornaments (Porro and Barbero 1994), but they were the exception, the ones that would also wear elegant dresses made with expensive European fabrics. But this by no means modified the role women played: in the sixteenth century, Ruy Díaz de Guzmán describes how his father, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán "was forced to settle down, have a home, and to wed *doña* Ursula" following Irala's orders, who was taking revenge against those that had dared to challenge his authority. Ursula de Irala was a mestiza, a nonpure white, and this marriage was an outrageous punishment for Pérez de Guzmán (Lafuente Machaín 1955:565). These mixed presences have been reported by archaeology with the constant recovery, in middle- or upper-class households, of Indian and criollo kitchen pottery: on the table, the world of the male, the image of his household as seen from outside, mayolicas from Talavera or porcelains from the Orient were used, and in the kitchen the private world of females, pots from Santa Fe or *tinajas* from Mendoza.

In the nineteenth century, the feminine presence in archaeology suddenly changed: by 1850 hundreds of flasks of French perfumes began to appear, together with waters from Köln (or Colonias), later called Aguas Floridas, flasks for maize powder, a skin whitener, and later for the *afeites* which, until 1920, was about all the makeup a decent woman would wear. And in the same way we find the feminine hand in kitchen bottles with oils and other dressings still preserved (Schávelzon 1994). Remains of the *Revienta Caballos* seeds (*Solanum Sisymbrii Folium*) were also recovered, which was a very strong abortive that was used in the Peña household sometime between 1850 and 1895 (D'Ambrogio 1996), showing that the life of females of whichever social class was hard and responded to a prejudiced, patriarchal, and macho view of the world.

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5

All Other Things from a City

The Nonarchitectural Evidence

THE FAUNISTIC AND MALACOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Among the archaeological works carried out in the city, food has been one of the major subjects of investigation. This interest was based on the possibility of discovering what the nutritional habits really consisted of in a society that enjoyed unlimited access to cow meat almost at no cost. But in spite of this, the issue was considered a major one given the obvious inconsistency of the historic "myth of the barbecue'' as the exclusive source of food. Currently the country is famous worldwide for its beef and for the very high rate of cow meat consumed per inhabitant. Historically, the average amount consumed was nearly 250 kilograms per person a year; but the archaeological evidence together with the revision of historic documents do apparently indicate other possibilities concerning what was eaten and how it was cooked. When examining the results obtained from the bone studies performed in Buenos Aires (Silveira 1995; 1996; 1997), it is necessary to understand that the many literary descriptions of astonishment written by travelers of an European origin were motivated by the contrasting scarcity of red meats consumed in their home countries, averaging 17 kilograms per person yearly in countries such as France or Germany; in England the rate was even lower (Montanari 1993:153). However, little was mentioned about the domestic consumption of lamb, poultry, fish, and other small animals, as this was much more often seen in Europe.

The archaeological evidence is wide and varied. For the early seventeenth century we have a sample from the garbage of an upper social class household located at 350 Moreno Street, where *Bos Taurus* and *Ovis Aries* were identified. This allows us to cast a new look on the historic tradition according to which sheep meat, prior to the nineteenth century, was not eaten. In later times or in locations farther from the urban area, evidences are almost similar: at the Coni Press, in the oldest layer dated by the seventeenth century, bovines, ovines, and horses were identified, in relation with the place where garbage was disposed of in the city. Interestingly, in this case 5.26% of the bones were burnt,

suggesting the presence of roasted and not only boiled meat. By the early nineteenth century the bone remains found at the Caserón de Rosas continue this pattern: an absolute majority of *Bos Taurus* (59.10%), followed by *Ovis Aries* (11.8%), nonidentified mammalians (23.65%), and fowl (0.11%). The last and almost insignificant figure has been interpreted from the evidence of the consumption of those bones by dogs, quite abundant in the city, and whose traces can be clearly seen in the big bones. But in this case the percentage of burnt bones, corresponding to the late nineteenth century, amounts to 25.67% of the total. In the cabildo, however, besides cows and sheep, there is evidence of fish (*Doridae*), rodents (*Rodentia indet*), and fowl. According to studies concluded, eating rodents was common until the twentieth century, specially the one locally known as *cuís* (*Cavia Aperea Pamparum).* In other sites, particularly of the nineteenth century, data are similar and show a steady percentage of bovines of over 50% of the remains identified; burnt bones range from 0.15% in Parque Lezama to 22.58% in the house located at 751 Defensa Street, showing how during the late eighteenth century and all along the nineteenth, the habit of roasting meat turned increasingly popular. Perhaps this nutritional habit was intimately associated to the technical progress achieved in cattle breeding, selection of races, improvement of pastures, and quality control.

There are four groups of bones showing a better state of conservation than those referred to before and which have allowed for a more in-depth study. As a rule, the soil of the city is remarkably acid and polluted and it presents a shallow water table. As a consequence, bones are in a very bad state of preservation. In four cases, the skillfully built garbage pits located inside the *tosca* of the subsoil, allowed for an outstanding state of preservation even of the tiniest fish scales. At the Peña house (392 San Lorenzo Street) between 1830 and 1870, garbage was accumulated in a huge chamber that contained luxury pieces of Creamware and Pearlware; there, only remains of mammalians were identified, namely, bovines (85.05%) and ovines (14.95%). Instead, in the blind drains of the house occupied between 1870 and 1894, at a time when the building was used as a conventillo, a great variety of animals appeared: turkey (*Melearis Pavogallo*), pig (*Sus Scrofa*), cuís (*Cavia Aperea Pamparum),* ducks and geese (*Anatidae*), vizcacha, a South American rodent (*Lagostomus*), and abundant poultry, rodents, and domestic animals such as cats. In this case, we have attributed such a variety not to wealth but rather to the heterogeneous ethnic composition of those who dwelt in the conventillo. We could even state that wealthy, traditional families had a more monotonous diet than that of humble European and East Asiatic immigrant families (Figure 41).

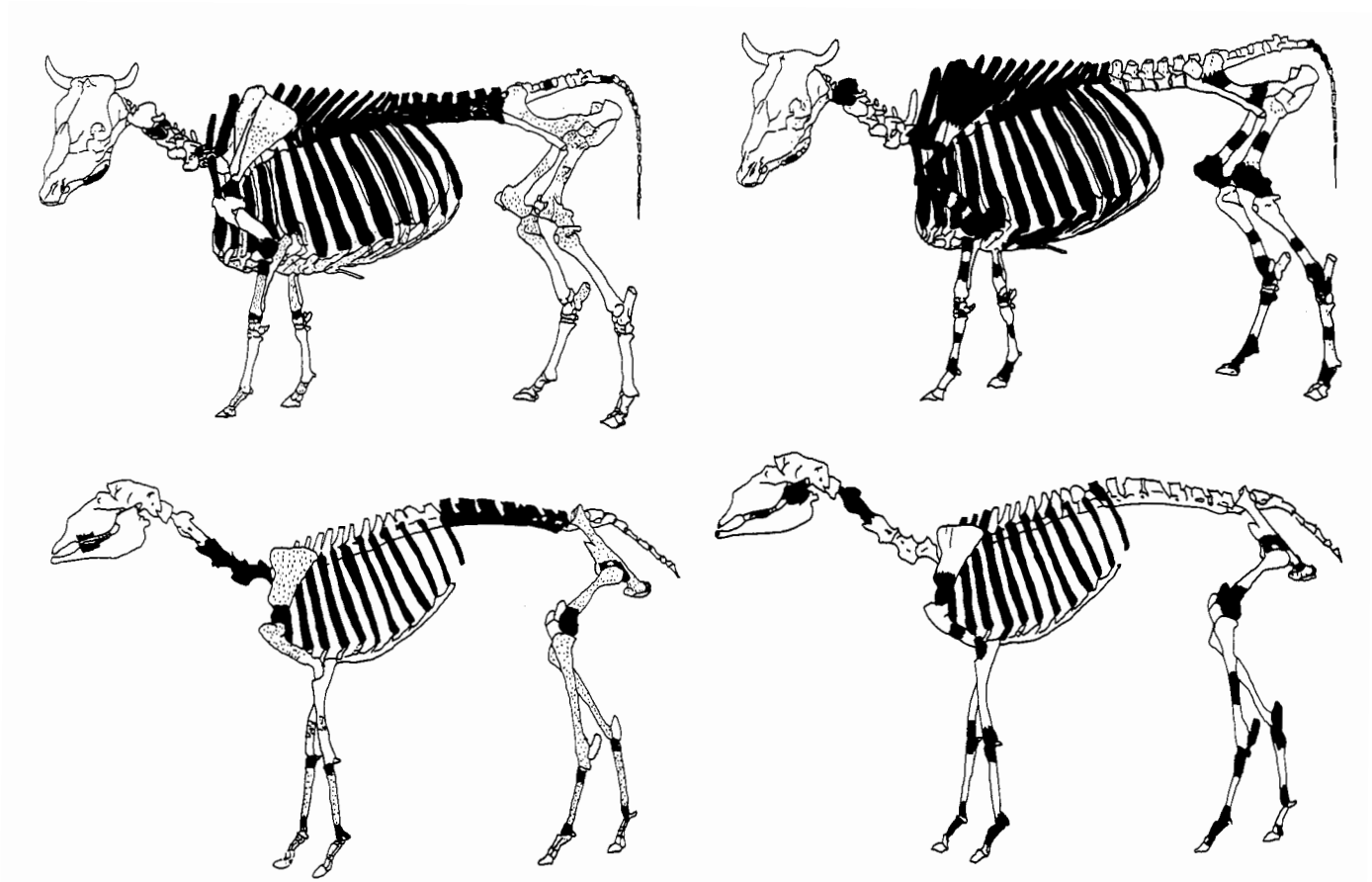

Figure 41. Consumer preferences between beef and lamb during the first half of the nineteenth century. Left, from the garbage pit of a wealthy family located at 392 San Lorenzo Street. Right, from a humble fonda at 433 Balcarce Street (M. Silveira 1997).

Another group excavated was the one located at 433 Balcarce Street, a refill attributed to the fonda (a modest eating house or tavern) of the individuals who worked in the construction of the building between 1848 and 1850. This garbage allowed for the identification of 1,772 bones from a total of 2,994 fragments; interestingly, we have found that in spite of the poor economic capacity of customers, the variety was also remarkable, particularly in regard to chicken, poultry, and wild birds, including pigeons, partridge, and ostrich. Roasted bones were almost nonexistent, as the kitchen was located inside the building. This material can be compared with that recovered from the garbage pit of the Santo Domingo convent, dated a little earlier between 1790 and 1820. There, the diet consisted mainly of fish, chicken, poultry, and wild birds, although remains of red meat were also found (Silveira 1997). From a total of 18,000 bones analyzed—leaving fish aside—only 5.7% of *Bos Taurus* (cow) were identified by gender and species; 8.6% corresponded to *Ovis Aries* (sheep), and 2.8% to Sus Scrofa (pig), but birds accounted for a total 68.7%. Fish, not included in the previous percentages, account for 27.5% of the total bone fragments excavated. Food was healthier, less varied, and better prepared, and included *delicatessen* such as armadillo (*Dasypus Hibridus*), goose (*Coscoroba sp.*) and *martineta* (*Eudromia Elegans*).

The present knowledge on this subject suggests that the diet of the porteños was considerably rich in all sorts of meats and that the variety thereof was remarkable. The greater or poorer presence of the different species had more to do with nutritional habits or cooking traditions than with wealth, power, or accessibility to products. The possibility of eating that much meat indicates in itself an outstanding difference in relation to all the European societies from the sixteenth and up to the twentieth century.

Though in an incipient state, malacological studies have also allowed us to provide answers for a number of questions and to bring forth new issues, like the use of shells to pave roads, such as the one that connected the Caserón de Rosas with the city, today the most important street in Buenos Aires. Historians discussed the issue for more than half a century because the case was unique in the city and because of the huge volume of shells needed for such a work; even the probable origin of the small shells constituted an unsolvable question. Field work allowed us to identify the shells as *Pitar Rostrata* and *Calliostema* and the slopes of the old river in Belgrano as their place of origin (Schávelzon 1994).

THE CERAMIC EVIDENCE

In Buenos Aires, ceramic has been the material that deserved the more thorough study. The scheme consisting of three large groups established for analysis has already been presented, namely, the pre-Hispanic Indian tradition that continued for several centuries in colonial times; the European tradition—even when objects were manufactured in the continent—and the blend of both traditions and the African one, resulting in the mestizo tradition.

The European tradition is represented by almost every Spanish ceramic published in international bibliography: the mayolicas are present from the very early times, being considered as a symbol of hierarchy, power, and wealth. Due to the poverty that initially prevailed in the city, mayolicas became more popular in the seventeenth century, with abundant Ichtuknee, the many types of Talavera, Sevilla, and Italian types such as Montelupo Polychrome. From Panamá, the mayolicas produced in Central America would also arrive. In the eighteenth century, when the city enjoyed great wealth, the French Faiance together with the Mexican and Peruvian mayolicas became more popular, the Delft from England included. Late in the century, the local market was full of mayolicas from Triana, unique in its kind, that were used until the midnineteenth century (Figure 42).

Europe is also represented by common red coarse earthenwares: oil jars, Orange Micaceous, Feldspar Inlaid, Green Lebrillo, and other varieties with a glazed cover. But these types have always been rare; it would seem local inhabitants preferred the very low price of good domestic ceramics over the Spanish ones, which were not very attractive and lacked the prestige attributed to mayolicas. In the eighteenth century there was a massive entrance of El Morro ceramics, whose Caribbean origin is still controversial but whose presence in Buenos Aires has been, at times, massive. Just one garbage pit (at 433 Balcarce Street) produced 3,810 fragments thereof, while only half of the contents of the site have been excavated. Up to the midnineteenth century there were smaller amounts of Slipware from the United States and England, and also of the Rey type with its outstanding glazings.

In the region, many ceramics were produced following the European tradition of plumb glazings. The most common since the eighteenth century was the Pasta Blanca Green on Yellow (Schávelzon 1991:100), with an apparent origin in the southern coast of Brazil, together with its contemporary Pasta Roja Green on Yellow (Schávelzon 1991:88). Since the early nineteenth century, in Buenos Aires or its

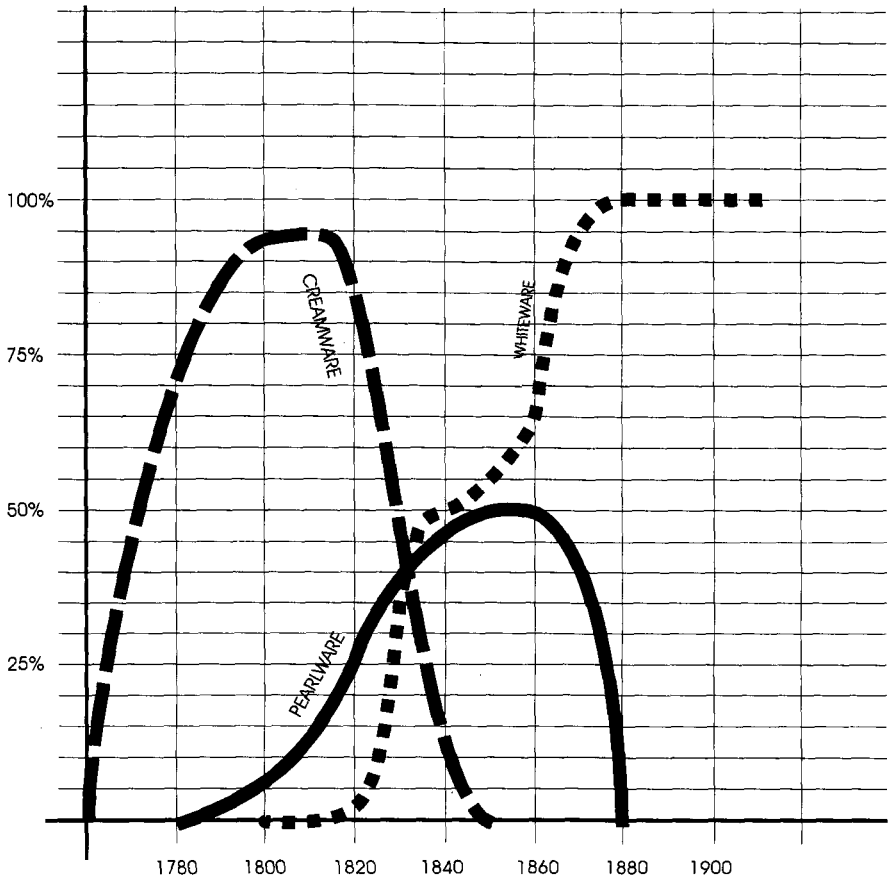

Figure 42. Relation between different types of White Refined Earthenware in household contexts between 1780 and 1900.

vicinity, the Utilitarian ceramic was produced, very popular in the entire Río de la Plata region among the lower social classes (Figure 43).

The European tradition contrasted with the continuity of the fully Indian ceramics, as these would sometimes respect the same manufacturing technique, the same paste, decoration, and form, for centuries. Even though there was no local production, the Indian ceramics found in the city correspond to the Guaraní type that originated in the region of the close-by fluvial littoral, very possibly from far-away north, even from Brazil and Paraguay. At this point, there are three accurately defined types: Buenos Aires Cepillado, Buenos Aires Decorado, and

Buenos Aires Evertido, all of them typified by their shape and decoration. The first two are the oldest, placed within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while the latter one is posterior, having arrived during the eighteenth century following several changes, to enter into the category of criollo ceramic mixed with African traditions.

The third group constitutes ceramics of regional production, that is, manufactured within the present Argentine territory or its boundaries, basically typified by features of the Indian, European, and African cultures. There are lathe-manufactured or handmade pieces, with red Guaraní painting and a mixture of Spanish and/or indigenous

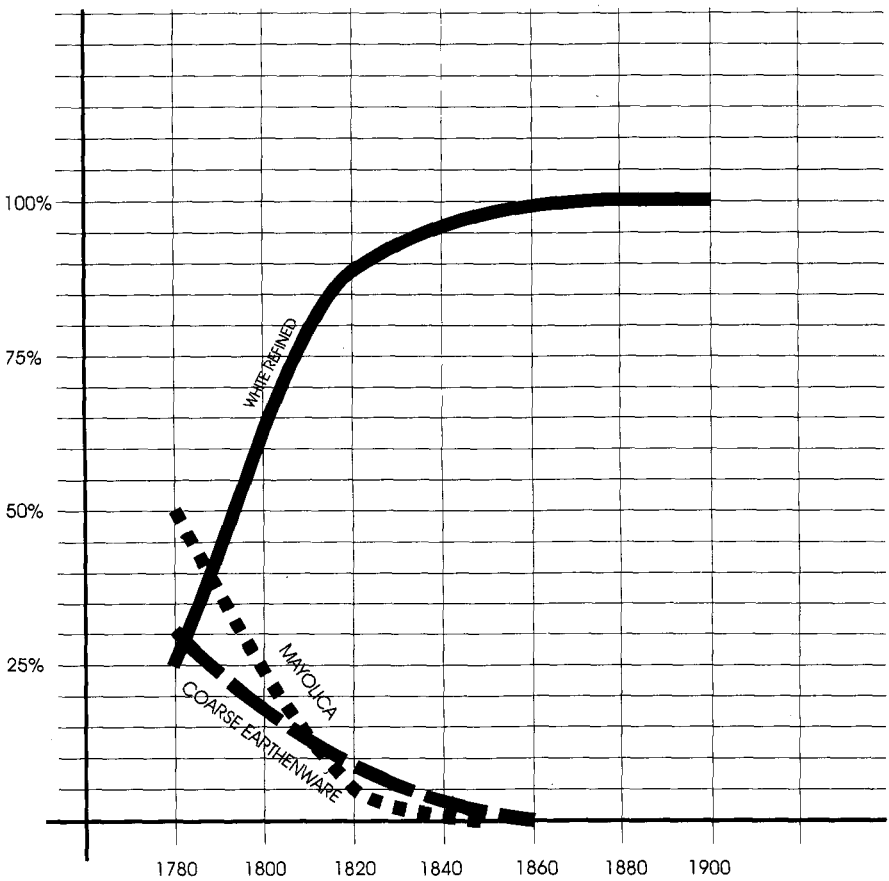

Figure 43. Relation in the amounts of White Refined, coarse, and mayolica pottery in household contexts between 1780 and 1900.

shapes; the decoration, depending on each case, continues the pre-Hispanic tradition or on the contrary is fully European, including Gothic inscriptions and grotto-like motifs from the Renaissance. Within this group, several types have already been established: the Monocromo Rojo is the oldest and simplest one, made with a lathe and painted in red strips, with shapes that are either a continuation of the pre-Columbian ones or an imitation of those bowls, earthen pans, glazed earthenware tubs, and Spanish canteens (Ceruti 1983). By the late eighteenth century, imitations of Creamware dishes appeared; there are a few Policromo Rojo ceramics with additions of black and white. The other group is the Monocromo Rojo Bruñido, previously known as *engobado,* typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and made, apparently, in the Jesuit missions. This ceramic was intended to imitate the European glazings by means of a super quality polish that provided a very characteristic glitter. In this case, the shapes have been fully copied from the European ones.

Another group, the criollo ceramics, comprises a large number of earthen jars and varied containers made of coarse ceramic, with no paint, that are hand-rolled or simply made by building the walls in the lathe. These have not as yet been studied in detail, but they have been manufactured throughout the territory since the very early seventeenth century, particularly in Paraguay, Córdoba, Mendoza, Santa Fe, Salta, and Tucumán. The amount of large earthen jars, used in the manufacture and conservation of wine, that have arrived in Buenos Aires since that time and up to the end of the nineteenth century, reused here as water containers, is large. Another rare group is the one composed of ceramic objects manufactured with no lathe, small in size, and in very dark colors, which I have attributed to the African population and which are occasionally confused with Indian tradition pieces. There are also quite a few authentic African pipes.

The Creamware refined earthenwares were brought to Buenos Aires, as contraband, since the late eighteenth century, and by the Independence times they had already replaced the Spanish mayolicas, excepting those of Triana. The Creamware dishes and tea or coffee cups (Figure 14b) were soon adopted by the wealthy social classes, and just by the early nineteenth century, the middle classes already owned Pearlware tablewares (Figure 18b). Interestingly, the garbage pits show an extended continuity in the use of these objects, and up to the mid-nineteenth century, the Creamware refined earthenwares were still being used; the Pearlwares in turn were used up to nearly the end of the nineteenth century. This is a constant trait observed in the entire city: modernity in the accessibility to commodities, hand-in-hand with the

tradition of using them for as long as possible. In a way, it represents the opposite attitude observed toward architecture: people were reluctant to accept the change of shapes and functions and it took them a long time to accept them, as opposed to the very quick process of alteration and destruction of buildings. The local production of pottery would not take place until the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 15).

THE EVIDENCE OF MATERIAL CULTURE

Many other lines of evidence have been taken into consideration to understand the city and its life; objects such as glass or stoneware, bone or stone, construction materials, tools and artifacts, are all elements that allow us to identify behavioral patterns and consumer habits. Small objects such as buttons, coins, medals, toys, or marbles are an open window to some domestic aspects that would be hard to understand through other sources of information. The world of objects is truly wide, particulary due to the strong presence of a culture always eager to consume material objects, enriched by constant trading and intense contraband activities. Figures 15 and 38 show that the amount of imported objects increased on the basis of two variables: time and social status. On average, by 1650 the lower groups in the city owned nearly 30% of the objects brought from abroad; instead, the wealthy groups owned over 70%. Materials obtained from a pit excavated in the cabildo and dated for those years has indicated that 88.60% of them were European objects; we have previously referred to a garbage pit accurately dated from 1630–1650 that yielded an average of 88.66% of imported products (at Moreno 350 Street); these figures, no doubt, are very coincidental (Figure 15).

One century later the material commodities of the urban poor would constantly increase to reach, around 1800, the same average as that of wealthy families: about 85%. This is to say, one group had expensive objects and the other much cheaper ones, but the rate between local and imported products was about the same. A place so modest as the forge of a workshop in a church (San Telmo), built in the early eighteenth century, yielded 38% of objects that originated abroad; one century later, the powerful priests of Santo Domingo had a garbage pit with 97.53% of imported objects; by 1848–1850, the construction workers at 433 Balcarce Street had among their wastes 92.14% of objects brought from abroad.

Up until the mideighteenth century, most of these imports were from Spain, while later they proved to be of English origin. Averages in

both cases amount to nearly 90%, so that in both occasions, the great majority of commodities were from the previously stated countries. This can be further corroborated through commercial statistics: in Figure 19 it can be seen that shortly after the Independence, between 1821 and 1842, of 4,215 vessels arriving to port—leaving aside the Brazilian/Portuguese and the Uruguayan ones considered as frontier traffic—34.99% came from England and 31.48% from the United States. Together, they accounted for 66.47% of the international total, followed by France with less than 10% (Figure 19).

Up to this day, four garbage pits with a daily use that corresponds to the first half of the nineteenth century have been excavated, precisely when the highest peak in the use of imported objects was reached. The analysis that followed allowed us to understand some urban attitudes toward consumption and disposal of objects. The possibility of establishing a comparison certainly exists, inasmuch as three of them are coincidental in containing food and general home remains, while the fourth one contained remains of food and working activities. In turn, social positions were mixed—three corresponded to the upper level and one to the lower—and finally, three of them were civil while one was religious. Needless to say, when we talk of upper or lower social classes we refer exclusively to the urban area, as the situation of wealth or poverty in rural contexts was totally different. This was so not only for the type of objects used but because of the attitude of people toward them. Processes were so different that we have often found among the garbage of "the city poor" a whole variety of objects that rural inhabitants would have never disposed of. Glasses recovered from the Peña house have shown that almost fifty bottles of wine were disposed of which were not broken at the time they were thrown away; the workers at Balcarce 433 Street did the same with almost one hundred bottles, probably closer to two hundred, considering that only half of the garbage deposit corresponding to a period of only two years of use was excavated. At the fonda or tavern, all of the unbroken dishes (over a hundred) were disposed of after the works came to an end. At the Ezcurra house, several unbroken dishes were disposed of together with a small Creamware cup and carved glasses.

In all four cases, the percentage of local or regional objects shows that over 90% of them were brought from abroad. The minimum average corresponded to the Santo Domingo convent, while the highest average (over 99% of imported materials) corresponded to two remarkably different social groups: the workers of the fonda and the Peña fam-

ily. We should also point out that perhaps, considering that the convent and the Ezcurra house were slightly older, the corresponding percentages resulted, for that reason, a little lower (Table 1).

The difference between these amounts of imported products among the urban wealthy population in relation to the poor can be explained by observing a totally different context: at the rear of the Ezcurra house a group of materials was found that strongly suggests the place was occupied by an Afro or Afro-Indian group throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among them, 73.50% of the objects were of local or regional manufacture; 26.50% of them were of a foreign origin.

As to the percentage of each ceramic group, in the framework of the universal categories of refined earthenware, red-coarse ceramic, porcelain and mayolica—leaving aside stoneware, which was almost nonexistent—refined earthenware constitutes the more significant group recovered at the convent and at the Peña house in coincidence with the upper social levels, while at the fonda, coarse earthenware, hardly present in the previously mentioned cases, was more abundantly found. The Ezcurra house was an exception because of the evident identical preference for Triana mayolicas and Creamware. The small quantitative distorsion observed in the pit of the convent has been interpreted on the basis of its slightly greater antiquity; instead, for the same case, the higher presence of Spanish mayolicas has been understood as a conservative attitude toward the change refined earthenware signified. This would also seem to be the case in the Ezcurra house, where although Creamware did exist, there was a very high percentage of mayolicas, all of them corresponding to the same set of tableware, plus some chamber pots that exhibited an identical decorative pattern. Porcelain is scarce in all cases, something usual until the late nineteenth century. On the contrary, the Peña family had no mayolicas. We must bear in mind that the very last mayolicas to arrive in the country, identified as Triana type, became popular simultaneoulsy with the diffusion of Creamware. This means people could make their choice, during that same period of

Table 1. Rate of Local and Imported Objects of the Table/Cooking Ware (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Local/regional	9.21	0.59	0.57	11.92
Imported	90.79	99.41	99.43	88.08

time, between traditional Spanish objects or new things brought from England (Table 2).

The relation between types of pottery is interesting: in the first place it would be only a matter of logics to assume that a direct relation should exist between the amounts found per type and dating, this meaning that the oldest garbage pit would show a higher concentration of the oldest pottery, and so on. However, this is only observed in the garbage pit of Santo Domingo, which yielded 85.76% Creamware. Creamware is minimal at the fonda of the midnineteenth. century, something that is also logical, as we may assume that the tableware was specifically bought for the construction workers, therefore, implying no continuity in the family. But the Peña house shows an outstanding concentration of Pearlware (42%) and large amounts of Creamware (23.66%), considering the time when the pit was initiated, and this kind of pottery was already old, with, simultaneously, a volume of one-third of Whiteware (Table 3). What can we learn from this? Probably, these two families were very conservative when it came to disposing of objects, but they were as well quite up to date in regard to new consumer commodities. They would buy whatever was new, but would keep it for a long time. The Peña family hardly has other more modest ceramics, but the proportion of them at the Ezcurra house is remarkable: did they perhaps have more servants than the Peña family? This might be true, as the Peña family lived at the border of the city and the Ezcurras were located just off the Plaza Mayor.

In Table 3 some deviations in the pattern, which we could almost anticipate, can be observed, but that relation, however, does not take place between household materials and others used for cooking or eating, The Peña house has the largest percentage of household materials, followed by the convent, and in a lesser degree by the fonda. In the three cases the percentage is small: it ranges between 3.14% and 8.05%. This is evidence of the significance and importance of tableware in urban life, in relation to all other objects of the material culture (Table 4).

In this relation, an issue that catches the attention is the low amount of glass compared to ceramics. Though the numeric presence of glass is remarkable when comparing it with that of previous centuries and considering as well the scarcity of this material in the countryside around the city, the lack of an organized pattern in all the cases becomes apparent. Maybe the differences have to do with the varied uses given to the different containers and the attitudes of people from totally different contexts toward disposal of their properties.

The convent yielded little glass (0.50%), but the amount was similar for black glass (bottles of wine and gin) and transparent glass (phar-

Table 2. Total Percentage per Ceramic Groups (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Refined earthenware	64.69	18.67	87.70	27.84
Coarse earthenware	15.78	68.39	2.60	34.06
Porcelain	0.21	1.87	2.50	6.08
Mayolica	19.07	2.03	0.00	31.98

Table 3. Rates of Refined Earthenware Per Type (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Creamware	85.76	2.91	23.66	100
Pearlware	10.84	18.66	42.00	0
Whiteware	3.38	59.41	34.33	0

Table 4. Rates between Household Objects and Tableware (Total Amounts and %)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Domestic objects	32	466	225	109
Table & kitchenware	476	9474	2794	478
%	6.72	4.91	8.05	4.38

macy, toilet articles, cups, tumblers, lighting); the fonda instead yielded a higher amount of glass (27.15%), and at the Peña and the Ezcurra houses it climbs to 52.36% and 66.66% respectively (Table 5). Evidently, numerous bottles of alcoholic beverages were used at the fonda, but such was not the case in other household contexts. The relation was also inverse regarding flasks, glasses, cups, tulip shades, or tubes for lamps. Color glass, usually typical of the upper social classes, is abundant at the Peña house, poor at the fonda, and almost nonexistent at the convent (Table 6). But the relation between bottles of gin and wine is the opposite: the monks had the largest amount, the fonda followed, and they were almost nonexistent at the Peña house. Was this merely a habit of the family? The question is not that simple, because in the nineteenth century drinking gin was a changing sign of the upper social class turned into a lower social level. This explains why the incidence is

Table 5. Rates between Glass and Ceramic (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Glass	0.50	27.15	52.36	66.66
Ceramic	99.50	72.85	47.64	33.34

Table 6. Rates between Types of Glasses (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Black+green (alcohol)	50.00	79.66	68.36	10.29
Transparent (glassware)	49.50	20.10	27.85	89.71
Colors	0.50	0.24	3.79	0.00

Table 7. Gin and Wine Glass (%)

	Sto.Dgo.	Fonda	Peña	Ezcurra
Wine	65.00	84.60	99.08	77.77
Gin	35.00	15.40	0.92	22.23

so high in the kitchen of the Santo Domingo convent, a religious order with a remarkable economic capacity. At the Ezcurra house, just one bottle of gin was thrown away, and bottles of wine were extremely bizarre: two were dated 1750–1780 and two others 1820–1840 (Table 7). Is this an indication there were no alcoholic beverages in that house?

Perhaps we are now able, through the data obtained so far, to establish patterns, no matter how varied they may be, related with the social groups that used and disposed of those objects. We stand before an evidence that depicts a very peculiar society: nowhere else in the country at that time would it have been possible to see that in the garbage pits of both wealthy families and poor workers, over 90% of the objects found had been brought from abroad. In the four analyzed cases the extraregional consumption pattern was the same. All this considered, what then were the precise indicators of wealth? We can bring forward the following hypotheses:

1. A greater quickness in receiving new, fashionable, imported goods (as for instance new potteries)

2. The disposal of objects still fit to be used (bottles, flasks, tableware)
3. The selection of particular products in the market with no consideration of price but rather to social significance or prestige
4. The presence of luxury objects (cups, jars, toothbrushes, perfumes, medicine flasks, flower pots), indicating a wider differentiation in the functions of material culture
5. The increase of these objects in relation to the daily used tableware throughout time
6. The utilization of objects of a homogeneous design (for instance: sets of dishes with the same decoration than the chamber and flower pots)
7. The increase, throughout time, of the percentage of porcelain in relation to other products
8. The gradual decrease, throughout time, of the presence of culturally non-European objects (such as regional ceramics)
9. The presence of objects specifically used by females, infants, and the elderly

There are two features among wealthy families that have apparently remained incorporated with their behavioral patterns: objects that were used for a long time, even when they were no longer fashionable. This accounts for the presence of old materials in much more modern garbage pits, and it also explains the small number of reused or modified objects for functions different from those for which they had been manufactured. This has to do with the establishment of Buenos Aires as an active economic market, though it was still at the margins of the international networks of suppliers, with permanent periods of lack or overabundance of certain commodities, something that forced the population to provide for their needs with the available alternatives. However, necessity was never so desperate as to promote the development of a domestic craftmanship first, or of a domestic industry later, at least until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, what we are really witnessing is the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of capitalism right at the edge of the old Spanish empire.

THE BOTANICAL AND CHEMICAL EVIDENCE

In Buenos Aires, historical archaeology is a new field of research; however, a number of studies have been carried out with the floated vegetal material obtained from the garbage pits of a wealthy family, the

Peñas, between 1830 and 1890 (D'Ambrogio 1996). The seeds identified fit well with the everyday life of that period, like the tinctorial species (*Hoffmanseggia Falcaria*) used as a dark red dye. The domestic use of this plant is related to the strict obligation imposed by Juan Manuel de Rosas in those times of wearing that color, so that from one day to the next, everyone was forced to dye clothes, flags, and laces in their homes. In 1852 the Rosas government came to an end and his symbols of power were massively disposed of, so buttons with his name were frequently found among the garbage.

Another type of domestic botanical evidence are the plants, both abortive and medicinal, like the well known *Solanus Sisymbriifolium,* common between the sixteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, when scientific medicine emerged and home remedies were no longer used. These were replaced, as seen through archaeology, by an infinite variety of glass flasks that contained different kinds of patent medicines or prescriptions prepared in pharmacies.

Concerning nutritional plants used in the kitchen, we have found peach cores, or orange, pomegranate, melon and watermelon seeds, which are very common. Fig trees, (*Ficus Carica*) and vines (*Vitis Vinifera*) were frequently found by homes to provide some shade in the yards, while the fruits were eaten. Perhaps, the most common feature of a porteño patio is precisely the vine, which would cover it almost completely; this is a habit that can be traced back to the very last years of the sixteenth century.

The chemical evidences are limited to the identification of liquids or solids included in flasks and bottles through spectophotogrametry or through chemical analysis. These studies allow us to identify kitchen products such as olive oil and mustard inside reused and later disposed-of flasks, together with heavy derivatives of oil such as gas-oil, and particularly coal, used to light fires.

6 An Archaeological Overview of Downtown Buenos Aires

THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Buenos Aires was founded in a small plain on the upper part of a slope 8 to 10 meters high facing the river; at its base, there was a bed of soft rocks of the type locally known as *tosca.* The village was placed on top of that platform parallel to the coast, as the river was an important part of everyday life: people drank water from it (wells appeared much later), and women did their washing in it. The horizon was permanently observed for any approaching ships. Besides, the world that really mattered was the one across the great ocean: Europe. From Europe came most of the items that were indispensable to life; to Europe was carried the silver smuggled out of the country. From Europe came the orders and authorizations, and also the relatives and the last news. Europe was the model of how to live and of the example of white society to which it was necessary to conform; however, people at that time were hardly concerned about what the exact meaning of being white was. But above all, Europe was the land where people were bound to return, once they had accomplished their original purpose of *hacer la América.*

The trazado drawn by Juan de Garay responded to an urban typology with sound background in the urban planning of the West Indies, and even though the established legislation did not fully correspond with the pattern, a subject that has been widely discussed among urban historians in America, Buenos Aires would be comprised within those cases that adapted well to the prototype. The pattern was composed of square blocks cut through with perpendicular streets, wherein one block would be left vacant to be used as a central plaza. Although the city presently displays a double plaza, the original one was simple, and it was surrounded by the fort on top of the slope and the buildings that housed the earthly and religious powers. The longitudinal arrangement and the noncentered plaza responded to the presence of the river and to two seasonal streams known as the Tercero del Sur and the Tercero del Medio (in fact there were not two but three, with the third being farther north), which were a natural limit in themselves and did not allow for

the further expansion of the city. These two rivulets turned into low and swampy, insurmountable zones with rain waters that drained to the streets and sidewalks. The beds of both rivulets have been the garbage dumps of Buenos Aires for almost three centuries.

To the west there were no real physical limits, and the perimeter of the plan was determined by the present streets of Balcarce-25 de Mayo, Libertad-Salta, Viamonte, and Estados Unidos. Beyond the streets of Arenales and San Juan, there were community lands used for small plantations, for obtaining wood, and for pasturing that were owned by the cabildo. This was an old Spanish tradition that was respected with some minor changes until the beginning of the eighteenth century with the purpose of preventing construction out of the city limits (de Paula 1985).

Actually, the surface of the original plain was not totally flat: the west side of the Plaza de Mayo, where the cabildo stands, has a difference in level of 2 meters between the two opposite ends. The maximum difference of almost 11 meters is reached at Parque Lezama and at the Tercero del Sur on Chile Street, where almost 4 meters of refill have been excavated over the original ground level. A detailed observation of the city, in spite of the numerous levelings carried out, shows that traces of the original topography still exist, and that these differences of level may well account for endemic floods. Archaeology has been able to show the intensity of changes that operated throughout time in the original topography of the city, and what has come forth is a constant repetition of refillings and levelings. Since the early seventeenth century, the city suffered a gradual process of flattening aimed at eliminating the differences of level of the original topography, both with refillings or cut downs; evidence of this has been reported in all excavations carried out, as a result of efforts performed by individuals and by society as a whole. This elimination of the original topography probably took place in an attempt to obtain a flat city, maybe in accordance with the existing visions of the Pampean desierto. Against the logics that more than once guided authorities to unlevel the streets so that water would run and drain freely in the Terceros or in the river, constant refills produced floods and closed lagoons, as waters had no way out. This situation, at the verge of the twenty-first century, remains the same because in spite of the sophisticated systems of storm water drains, the city floods periodically. Because of the ongoing refilling of the border shore, it is necessary to spend large amounts of money to evacuate accumulated water with major public works.

The cases of the Coni Press and Defensa 751 are more than eloquent in showing that owners, at the time of leveling their lots, chose an architectural solution coherent with the unexplicit but undoubtedly

prevailing urban policy: had they chosen different solutions, the uses of the lots would also have been different. The conservation of topography, which would have created nice visuals and interesting urban perspectives, the correct use of drainages by keeping them instead of shutting them off, together with the possibility of altering the line of continued facades, as was done up until the eighteenth century, would have yielded a very different city.

PARCELS AND ARCHITECTURE

Actually, what kind of a village was Buenos Aires in its earlier times? We do not know much about it; a number of deductions can be made based on observations of the ruins of Santa Fe la Vieja, more accurate perhaps than other data obtained through the contradictory historic documents and the poor archaeological evidence found. The main element was the Plaza Mayor, an empty block where activities related to politics, ceremony, socialization, and economic exchange took place. This plaza was the point of confluence of the most important streets, which in fact was the end of the routes to the port of the Riachuelo—presently Defensa Street—and to the north and west. Blocks that were 140 varas (approximately 115 meters) in length were divided into four square lots; however, the principal vecinos owned half a block each. In those large solares, the first wooden cabins with straw roofs were built (later they were made of adobe or tapia), but probably they did not last long as such. Subsequently, those large lots were very quickly fractioned into long, narrow strips with the front being one-eighth of a solar.

It is important to understand the significance for a Spaniard of those times of being the owner of an urban lot of such proportions, even when referring to the smaller ones: evidently, they would not have stood a minimal chance of owning such a lot in their hometowns. The typical Spanish lot, since the Middle Ages and until the Renaissance, measured from 95 to 250 square meters, and occasionally some were a little over 400 square meters (García Fernández 1985). In Buenos Aires, the smallest lot was 3.422 square meters. However, owners built only small households of one or two rooms, with a kitchen usually placed at the outside, protected by one of the walls. The earlier descriptions available refer to a small village, the most outstanding traits of which were represented by two towers: a round fortified tower used as a fortress, and another very humble tower that topped a wooden church.

The size of the lots and the faded definition of both their perimeters and the limits of the blocks, facilitated a wider use of the land,

which was used as a cultivating field to raise animals and as a passageway from one property to the other. At the back of the lots, dwellers were able to circulate at will, and this has been often observed in plans drawn until the eighteenth century. Domestic animals would roam freely, and children rambled with no restrictions. Unpaved and muddy streets were used by carriages, wagons, and horses only. Constructions were placed freely in the middle of the lots, leaving large empty spaces around them. The patio was used for preparing and taking the meals, for washing clothes, and basically as an open working space used by craftsmen, carpenters, or shoemakers. The lack of regulations concerning where households were to be placed within the lots until the creation of an Ordenanza in 1784 has received little attention among historians, who probably assumed, based on plans of the late eighteenth century, that the situation was identical prior to and after the issuance of the Ordenanza. Archaeology, however, is demonstrating a new and more accurate view of that process. As an example of this, we can mention the households at Alsina 455, Balcarce 531, Defensa 751, and Chile 830, with the respective changes that occurred throughout time. The garbage pit in Moreno 350, found at the front of the lot, indicates that for the inhabitants, the streets and the front of their buildings was not the same thing.

The regular square blocks existed only in the central area of the city. Away from it the limits of blocks faded, and there was little difference between the streets, the unoccupied blocks, and the small households built in the middle of large lots. Heterogeneity in the use of the lot as well as in the placement of houses was a common feature in the city until things suddenly changed with the new pattern of the rectified city. The pursuit of a geometrical regularity has been the principal project of the Enlightenment, which was continued and intensified at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A good part of the urban history in Buenos Aires has to do, precisely, with the attempt to display perfectly straight streets, perfectly square blocks, and lots with perfectly lined-up facades, while this expectation could hardly be met at the borders. Archaeology has succeeded to put forth the variety and originality of architecture prior to this process, and old plans show broken, irregular blocks, with *huecos,* empty spaces, and projections. Dead ends existed, and the Plaza Mayor, until the late eighteenth century, was surrounded by portals, as also was *el bajo,* the lower section of the slope, with the *recova* or market place in front of the river. Undoubtedly, during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries every effort was made to abort any modification on the prevailing standards of a perfectly geometrical city. Without hesitation, the most original traits in the urban structure were

eliminated; such attractive characteristics would also have allowed for the creation of a system that would grant priority to the inhabitant and the pedestrian over the variety of vehicles used at different times in history (Gutiérrez 1992). The rigidity of this accepted model caused the loss of the city's originality and its topography, and banned the existance of nodes or landmarks of a high urban or social density.

Several of the houses and buildings archaeologically excavated are located on the old river slope. Today, the slope is no longer there: the surface was leveled until it disappeared. True, the warehouses, depots, and custom houses built by Eduardo Taylor had no need of gravity to perform correctly, but the slope in itself constituted an urban border that created visuals of great beauty, and simultaneously separated and identified the zone of ports. With the constructions initiated in the place where the old fort used to stand, particularly the post office built by Sarmiento in 1873, the process of closing the visuals to the river, refilling the slope, and organizing new visuals toward the west was initiated, in a sort of denial of the existence of the river. These were actions that contradicted the logics of former projects, such as the Almacenes Huergo, in Balcarce 433. This urban pattern is still valid and is among the most absurd and obsolete urban policies that have been kept in force until the end of the twentieth century. More than one project was designed with the purpose of regaining the river for the city, particularly by landscapers who designed and built parks and open areas by the riverside, but most of them have been torn down during the present century, maintaining the policy of denying the river (Schávelzon 1987; 1988; Compilación 1933). The definite blind shield was put in place with the construction of Puerto Madero, initiated in 1880, when a large number of huge barracks shut all visual access to the coast; only recently, some relation between the city and the riverbanks is being restored.

Houses built during the entire seventeenth century and a part of the eighteenth, were mostly made with tapias or mud walls, though a small number of them were already built with bricks; since the early seventeenth century, tiles were used for roofs, adobe was also employed, and later, bricks fixed with mud. Even though some houses would be larger than normal, others, such as the Riglos residency, were enormous. The Riglos house had 39 rooms and 3 living rooms with roofs made of carved cedar, 51 doors and 12 stairs with turned balustrades, and 7 windows with iron bars, 2 stores, and a 2-room basement (Torre Revello 1945:111). In any case, most houses were modest, maybe displaying moldings or a projected cornice, balconies with projected iron bars, or a peaked roof. The privileged location for a house would be anywhere in the upper zone and close to the Calle Mayor,

where Garay had distributed the lots between his principal fellow colonizers, who had preferred the heights of the slope rather than the proximity of the plaza.

During the seventeenth century, churches and convents would slowly start to enhance the quality of their modest earlier architecture with buildings of larger dimensions as the city developed. Several public works were under way, such as the cabildo, the fort, or the convent of the Jesuits, thus adding to the image of an important city; however, Buenos Aires was never one of monumental architecture. These constructions created some particular perspectives and landscapes, helped to define the surroundings, and became referential landmarks for the community. Much too often, streets were impassable mires, emanations were offensive, and insalubrity was customary, but all in all the two- or three-story households with belvederes on the new flat terraces were preannouncing, by the end of the eighteenth century, the development of a noticeable city located at the far south of the continent. It was indeed unusual for the time and the place, but still it was no competitor for other urban centers such as Lima or Potosí.

In spite of its growth, the 144 original blocks surrounded by the ejido would only be fully occupied by the early eighteenth century. Around 1720 the process of appropriation of the community land started: the cabildo, in an almost illegal action, which was carried out with large benefits for the members of the cabildo, using as an excuse the pressure of demographic growth and eager to own land in the city, started to subdivide and sell the ejido. Suddenly, new urban centers begun to develop north, west, and south and the city expanded, even though the banks of the zanjones or Terceros remained unoccupied. The Altos de San Pedro appeared at the south around Defensa Street, which linked the plaza with the port, and there wealthy families built their residences. However, all around Chile Street only libertos, mestizos, or poor Indians settled, because other social classes would not live in the vicinity of the unhealthy zanjones. Most African communities would also settle in that section.

The census of the city that was performed in 1738, precisely at the time when the city was experiencing change due to a general economic improvement, shows what kind of city Buenos Aires was. On one side, the north and south borders still existed, and although the barriers were not so strictly respected, only isolated households and unfinished blocks appeared here and there. At the same time the banks of the river slope had been invaded, not only with small households but also with blocks that were being developed. This census lacked accuracy, but it corroborates the archaeological evidence that within the city a good

number of unoccupied lots remained and that side by side with great mansions with many rooms there were also "straw cabins", some "closed small room houses," some "little houses made of adobe,'' and some "old living rooms,'' though the kind of construction that was more often found was described as "house," meaning at least "a living room with a bedroom covered with tiles." Obviously, the central area was more densely built than the rest of the city, even though large households would be inhabited by lesser people occupying smaller lots. Figures show an average of four people per house, and in some streets of the southern section, the average ranged from 1.8 to 8.68 people per house (Ravignani 1919).

By 1738, only a few large colonial lots of *solar en cuadro* were left; south of the Plaza Mayor, over 72% of the lots were of dimensions smaller than one-eighth of a solar, and from 284 lots corresponding to the most important zone, only three still had the original dimensions. Store types recorded were pulperías, *tahonas* or baker's shops, small wares, low-class eating houses, a suitcase factory, and places where one could play *bolos* and *truques.* Averages show four households per street and ten per block. In short, this census indicates the city was not homogeneous but rather varied, with different coexisting types of architecture, building systems, and dimensions of lots. On Viamonte Street, there was even a "skin cabin," which has been defined as a *toldería* of the Pampa Indians, exactly confirming my archaeological field works.

In 1784 the cabildo issued a Real Ordenanza by which the vecinos were to close the front of their lots and build a perimetrical wall, and the plans were to be drawn up only by a certified *alarife* who had been previously accepted by authorities. These regulations, which synthesized former aspirations, succeeded in bringing about an important change in the disposition and shape of urban households: they were now required to line up at the front of the lot, on the sidewalk line. Interestingly, as a result of this regulation, houses ended up having no direct entrance, and builders had to turn to the opposite logics of design that prevailed since the nineteenth century. Therefore, houses would have a door followed by a zaguán that led to the patio, from which people would actually enter into the house. Consequently, interiors only had windows, but not doors, to the outside. Many owners took advantage of the situation and built boarding rooms at the front, while their own houses remained where they were, in the middle of the lot.

Owners of better properties that still did not occupy the entire lot decided to build minimal houses for rent. This was a consequence of the demographic growth in the central area, and due to the increasing economic development of the city, it represented a possibility for the lower

classes to live in a tiny house. The dimensions of these houses were unbelievable if considered under the present standards, as they had only one room less than 5 meters long, a patio 1 meter wide, and an open privy. Occasionally, these minimal units were chained in long strips along the front of the lots, while the backyards were left empty. This was probably similar to the kind of dwelling the Jesuit Cattaneo in 1729 would describe as "four walls in the shape of a rectangle, with no windows or with one at the most, and receiving some light through the door" (Torre Revello 1957). Everyday life for the lower class, even for those people who were lucky enough to own a minimal house, must have been indeed hard.

A survey carried out on the basis of available plans corresponding to the period comprised between 1784 and 1792, at the time the Real Ordenanza was in force, indicates that 13.2% of the houses built in the city were composed of one single room at the front with an access through a zaguán; 73.6% corresponded to a type of house typified as *sala con aposento* or living room and chamber, one next to the other, with the larger one at the front. This was a traditional type of building, which later became the typical household of the nineteenth century. The third group (9.4%) is represented by the same kind of construction, with the addition of a store built in the corner of the street or other spaces also used for trading, for workshops, or for other activites. Only a meager 3.8% corresponded to households of up to three patios, which have been wrongly identified by history as examples of the typical colonial architecture (Schávelzon 1994).

Traveler Francis Bond Head, in 1825, writes the following acid comment on what the interior of a porteña house looked like:

> These people would lay on the brick floor a flashy colored shag carpet from Brussels, hang a crystal chandelier from a roof beam and place against the whitened, always humid walls, a series of North American style chairs of a very poor taste. These families usually own an English piano and several marble flowerpots, but they do not have the vaguest idea on how to comfortably arrange their pieces of furniture. Ladies, with no reason, would sit with their backs against the wall (Head 1941:65).

This view, leaving aside the traveler's lack of sagacity to get acquainted with different realities, was indicative of a moment of change in the interior of urban households, of a point of inflection in the use of spaces and of architectural modifications that occurred between the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. Things had not always been that way. In the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century, interiors were merely whitened but had no plaster finish; floors, if any, were made of brick and rooms were provided with a few

pieces of furniture of hard woods, trunks, a large table with two long benches, and a bed with a canopy. Everyday life was not too different from that of poor European rural or urban inhabitants so well described by Braudel (1984), and whenever someone enjoyed a better situation, it was immediately reflected in their fabrics. Textiles were the most important attribute of wealthy people: draperies used as wall hangings similar to the ones Pedro de Mendoza displayed in 1536, carpets, cloth screens and hangings for canopies, sheets and blankets, and above all, clothes. Costumes, dresses, shirts, doublets, socks, stockings and hats were the true attributes of power, as a slave, a grand residency, and a blanket would cost the same.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Archaeology has brought forth the celerity and intensity of changing processes in architecture, involving physical structures, ornamental organization, and the use of space. This would seem rather unlikely in a city that suffered few modifications in its plan and distribution, at least for the first three centuries, but the analyzed evidence indicates a continued process of architectural alterations and change. In general, the average use of a household rarely exceeds one generation's time, and every single period of occupation has shown modifications in walls, foundations, floors, and the use of internal spaces. For the time being it is not possible to extend this statement to public architecture, but observations performed up until now at the cabildo and at the churches of Santo Domingo and San Telmo would suggest an identical pattern of change. During the nineteenth century this phenomenon has been even more intense: since the 1850s the entire city underwent drastic changes, growth reached unthinkable proportions, and the great immigration modified dramatically the social composition. However, that period in the history of Buenos Aires is not to be included in this book; modern Buenos Aires, the "Paris of America," shall be a part of future investigations.

What we have seen earlier in this chapter entitles us to consider that the hypothesis established in connection with architectural changes and the use made of buildings, with the virtual rupture with the river and the slope, and with the heterogeneous ways of using the lots, have been satisfactorily corroborated by archaeology. Also, the hypothesis put forth regarding material culture seems also to be corroborated: the city, even though it could cast the image of being European-like, white, and Catholic, was instead multicultural, multinational, pluriethnic, and,

above all, marginal. It was the *ciudad del fin del mundo,* the city at the end of the world, one that stubbornly refused to accept its reality and managed to change a destiny predetermined by the international, economic, and political structures. And this is what material culture reflects: the systematic decrease in the presence of Indian and criollo artifacts, and the permanent increase of goods that originated in Europe. At the border the situation was not quite so: nonimported ceramics prevailed, but the city was a consumer that did not produce them. Ceramics were not the only product that was not produced; actually, Buenos Aires constituted a perfectly organized intermediary market that supplied a good portion of the South American markets with whatever was needed in terms of smuggled products. Since the eighteenth century, the promptness of the arrival of Creamwares, manufactured by Wedgewood, Neale, and other contemporaries, is a proper indicator of this concept of a city to which, one way or another, products for massive and sumptuary consumption from all over the world would arrive, surprisingly quickly. However, marginality was undeniable, and everyday life suffered the consequences. It has been repeatedly observed that those imported products were used generation after generation, while architecture, on the contrary, had experienced frequent changes.

Would it be at all possible, based on archaeological findings, to identify one or more traits or attitudes of the former inhabitants of Buenos Aires with the porteños of these days? This would be an attempt to push archaeology beyond its limits; however, some peculiar continuities are worth mentioning. For instance, it is easy to observe that careful attention was paid with respect to the foundational pattern of the city; as a consequence, new streets were permanently opened in an attempt to further expand the square original plan, even when the city had grown a hundred times larger. In fact, instead of creating small, quiet corners with no traffic, the tendency is and has been that of opening more streets, when a preferable alternative would be to concentrate on correctly organizing the circulations. The denial of the river and the shore was only considered an urban problem on the side of municipal authorities in this decade, and efforts are being made to restore the social use of this area to what it used to be before the nineteenth century, The design of the lots and the positioning of the facades have remained the same since the eighteenth century, as also has been the tendency to regularize blocks.

The attitude of constantly changing the interior of a household still persists, and since the nineteenth century, this has been one of the most noticeable social indicators of "progress." The construction of the modern city resulted in the systematic demolition of all traces of colo-

nial architecture, to a point close to extinction. This attitude, so typical of liberalism in Argentina, has been frequently discussed, as it derived in the loss of the most significant buildings in the country, such as the Independence house in Tucumán or the cabildo in Buenos Aires, both of which were rebuilt by 1940. Difficulties in establishing policies for preservation of architecture and urban spaces would seem to be mostly based on this tradition of not preserving any kind of physical structure. The city's center does not change, but internal spaces certainly do. Material culture was duly provided for with all available novelties, even though these were carefully used and taken care of for extended periods of time. The issue of imports versus local production of basic goods and other elements for massive consumption is still a nationwide controversy; and concerning contraband and corruption, in more than one way, things have not changed much since the seventeenth century.

Buenos Aires, which for many centuries now stands almost at the edge of the world, has not succeeded in being totally European, like the prevailing white society back then would have wanted, but neither is it a typical Latin American city. From the very beginning, sound differences were established, and from then on, every effort was made so that they would become even more apparent. The initial pluriethnicity of Africans, Indians, and European whites and criollos was replaced in the nineteenth century by a multiplicity of origines from central and eastern Europe, people with different religions and tongues; it was still multiple and heterogeneous, but it also was massively white. The city that had no alternatives for survival, the most austral city of the continent, the most marginal within the structure Spain had designed for America, ended up being the most successful one, the one that was able to alter the established system to its own benefit without giving much consideration to the price that was to be paid or the consequences for other regions in the territory. The city survived and grew more important than Potosí, Córdoba, Santa Fe la Vieja, Asunción, and even Lima, and by the end of the nineteenth century it was one of the biggest cities in the world.

But growing big does not mean that the contradictions that come along with the fact of being, even today, a border will no longer exist: society is divided between luxury and poverty, among those who have easy access to massive consumption of material goods and others who survive in utmost helplessness.

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Glossary

Alameda: A public promenade consisting on a wide, long alley with lateral arrangements of trees and resting areas.
Adelantado: An honorary title granted by the king of Spain to the commander of expeditions discovering new territories.
Adobe: Earthen, sun-dried bricks.
Aduana seca: Inland customs house established for the purpose of avoiding illegal silver trafficking from Potosí and collecting taxes on other products.
Afeite: Ladies' makeup, as expressed in the past century.
Aguatero: Home water delivery man.
Alarife: A builder with an authorization to build issued by the cabildo.
Aljibe: A water well with an underground cistern.
Aposento: A room, a bedroom, a chamber.
Bajo: The lower banks of the Río de la Plata, by the slope.
Banda Oriental: The territories located at the eastern shores of the Río de la Plata; a term commonly used when referring to Uruguay.
Bolita: Marbles, chinas.
Bolos: A game presently known as *bochas,* played on an earthen alley on the ground and with wooden balls of two different sizes.
Bota de potro: Boots made with the skins of horses' feet, which do not cover the tip of the toes.
Botija: Olive jar, ceramic Spanish receptacle.
Cabildo: Colonial authorities in a city, voted by the *vecinos.* Also used to designate the building where government activities took place.
Campaña: Courtyard surrounding a city.
Caserón: Important, big house; not necessarily luxurious.
Conventillo: Tenement house. A former family residence in which rooms were separately rented to an individual or a family; buildings were modified for speculation purposes only. Usually all tenants would share a single privy. There was no kitchen.
China: *Mestizo* woman; the name is associated with the eyes of the Chinese.
Criollo: Children of Spaniards born in the Americas.
Desierto: Desert. Old Spanish term applied to territories occupied by nonwhite people.

Encomienda: Group of Indians in charge of a *vecino;* they would work on his ranch thanks to a *merced real.*

Engobe: Slip of washed clay applied to some coarse earthenwares.

Ejido: Common lands owned by the cabildo.

Estancia: Ranch, a very important rural establishment.

Fonda: Tavern, a humble eating house.

Gaucho: Traditional name for horsemen; men of the plains with extraordinary riding skills.

Hacer la América: A typical term used first by conquerors and later by immigrants. It means they would come to these southern lands, easily make a fortune, and eventually return to their home countries as rich men.

Hueco: Hole. In the past, it designated an unbuilt section of a block used as a marketplace or for "parking" carts and wagons.

Liberto: A slave who bought his own freedom; a slave liberated by his master.

Maloca: Massive attacks against Indian villages organized by white people.

Malón: Massive Indian attacks against villages or *estancias* owned by white people.

Marrano: Pig; insulting term used in Spain to designate converted Jews.

Mate: Traditional South American infusion, served in a peculiar container made with a gourd; the preparation is sipped through a small, thin cane, usually made of silver and known as "bombilla." Origins are pre-Hispanic.

Merced real: A special grant from the king. A royal favor.

Mestizo: Créole; people with a 'blend" of bloods.

Moreno: Dark-skinned person. Usually a blend of *criollos* and black people or Indians.

Nación: Self-organized, Afro-Argentine social and cultural groups.

Navíos de registro: Ships authorized by Spain to go to a particular territory.

Negritud: A term related to the quality of being black; the culture of African people in the Americas.

Ordenanza: A regulation issued by the government.

Pampa: The plains. A geographical, totally flat region with little vegetation, typical of the surroundings of Buenos Aires and with one of the richest cultivating soils on earth.

Pardo: A half-Indian, half-black person.

Plaza: In the past, an empty space within the city used as a marketplace or for public meetings. Usually, the main plaza was located in the middle of the city.

Porteño/a: People living by a port. A term applied to all inhabitants of Buenos Aires.

Pulpería: General store and tavern; a place for socializing and drinking but where no meals were served.

Real: A term used in the sixteenth century to designate a small settlement, an isolated stronghold, or even a port with some basic quarters.

Recova: Roofed gallery with columns built on the front side of large buildings.

Repartidos: Indians distributed at the time of the *repartimiento,* together with the lands.

Repartimiento: An action by which the king of Spain distributed urban and rural lands to the founders of a city.

Sala: Large room or living room.

Sirga, a la sirga: Method for pulling a ship upstream from a boat; the men would row upstream, anchor, pull the ship with ropes, and so on.

Solar: Urban lot. At the time of the foundation, the dimensions of these lots in Buenos Aires would be of a quarter of a block, or approximately 2,500 square meters.

Tahona: Tavern, cheap eating house.

Tango: Music and dance typical of Buenos Aires; in the past, the term would designate the special places where the Afro-Argentine *naciones* would get together to dance and socialize. *Tango* is an African word.

Tapia: Wall made with mud by means of large molds.

Tertulia: Home gatherings organized by ladies for cultural or social purposes.

Tinaja: Large earthenware jar, heavy, mostly used for wine production, transportation, and storage; locally manufactured.

Toldo, toldería: Indian shelters made with horse skins.

Tosca: In archaeology, sterile soil; in geology, hardpan; agglomerated clayey mud forming the subsoil of the city.

Trabajo vil: Vile, despicable work; a Spanish term to designate the kind of work white people would not do.

Traza: Spanish term to designate the plan of the colonial city; the strictly established perimeter of the city.

Truques: A game with Spanish playing cards.

Vaquerías: Wild cattle huntings.

Vecino: The head of a family of whites, usually the owner of a house. Each *vecino* represented an average of five or six people in the city.

Yerba, yerba mate: South American plant used to prepare *mate.*

Zaguán: A term of Arabian origin which designates the hallway of a house.

Zanjón: The bed of a stream or rivulet formed by accumulated storm waters or rainfalls.

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