

**The Concepción Convent of Cuenca, Ecuador:
Examining Gender, Class, and Economy in a
Latin American Convent**

by

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**The Concepción Convent of Cuenca, Ecuador:
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American Convent**

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Abstract

In colonial Latin American cities convents were not only spiritual and moral symbols in society they were also important economic institutions which helped finance the local economy. Because of the economic power many convents gained during the colonial period, nuns had opportunities and freedoms that were not available to other women. However, the prosperity of convents throughout the colonies decreased over time and with this the nuns lost much of their economic power.

This thesis discusses the changing role of convents in colonial society, focussing on the Inmaculada Concepción Convent in Cuenca, Ecuador, and how these changes affected the lives of the nuns within the convent. The purpose of this thesis is first to explore the material culture of the Concepción Convent to gain insight into how the institution functioned in society and secondly to examine the relationships of power and resistance going on within and outside the convent walls. This thesis also demonstrates how archaeological work in convents can provide new insights into the study of female institutions in archaeology. By examining the documentary history, material culture, and architecture of the Concepción Convent, I explore how the women within this convent were able to express ideas of ethnicity, class, and economic power both within and outside the convent. In so doing, these women were able to create a space that was simultaneously detached from the patriarchy of colonial society and ingrained in the social, ethnic, and religious ideals of that society. In addition, I examine how these expressions of power and resistance changed over time and the causes and effects of this change.

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Glossary

- Beata*: A woman living under informal religious vows.
- Beaterio*: A “community or house of women living under informal religious vows” (van Deusen 2001:267).
- Caballería*: A measure of land about 105 acres in size (Wood 1998:96).
- Cabildo*: The municipal council of the city.
- Calzada nuns*: A type of nun living in the *conventos grandes* of colonial cities. “They did not live in a communal manner, and each nun was allowed a personal income from her own private sources to spend as she desired” (Lavrin 1966:382)
- Capellanía*: A chaplaincy or endowment to the church or religious institution
- Censo*: An investment strategy widely used by religious institutions in colonial Latin America; they have been defined as follows: “...a contractual arrangement resembling a modern mortgage. Typically, a prospective borrower offered to place a *censo* ‘in favor’ of the monastery on a piece of real property that he or she possessed, receiving in exchange a certain sum of money from the nuns (the principal) and promising to pay a fixed percentage of the principal annually until such time as he or she might choose to repay the principal and cancel the obligation” (Burns 1999:64).
- Conventos grandes*: The large and popular convents of colonial society. Nuns living within these convents were *calzada* nuns.
- Coro*: The choir of the church, includes both the lower choir (*coro bajo*) and upper choir (*coro alto*).
- Criada*: A female servant in the convent.
- Criollo/criolla*: Men or women of Spanish ancestry born in the American colonies.
- Deposito*: A type of loan that was temporary and required collateral. These loans paid 5 percent interest annually and were usually repaid in five or ten years (Lavrin 1976:275).
- Doncella*: An unmarried virgin.
- Donada*: Women living in the convent who were of a higher status than servants of slaves but were still members of the servant class. These women were required to wear a veil and spend a year as a novice.

Ducado: A monetary value used in the Spanish colonies. It is a 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ K gold coin equal to 375 *maravedis* (the basic unit of currency). The peso is equal to 450 *maravedis* (Cook and Cook 1991:161).

Escucha: The nun acting as a listener in the convent *locutorio*.

Empedrada: A type of pavement used throughout the colonial and republican periods of Latin America which consists of small, round, stones placed in the ground to create a flat surface.

Encomienda: A grant given to an *encomendero* by the Spanish Crown providing the right to receive tribute payments and labour from a population of native people.

Escribano: A secretary for an office, such as the *cabildo*.

Finca: An estate.

Hacienda: A large estate or plot of land devoted to agricultural activities.

Locutorio: The visiting parlours of the convent.

Mayordomo: The business administrator for the convent or an individual nun.

Mestizo/mestiza: The offspring of Spanish and Indian parents.

Porteria: The passage way into the convent leading first to the *locutorios* and then into the cloister.

Reales: A unit of currency equal to 34 *maravedis* (Cook and Cook 1991:161).

Recogida: A woman who separates herself from the secular world and lives in seclusion.

Sacristía: The sacristy or location in the church where the sacred vessels, vestments, and church furnishings are kept.

Tabernáculo: The tabernacle or location in the Roman Catholic church where the Eucharist is kept. Also called the *sagrario*.

Torno: The rotating compartment in the *porteria* which allowed the passage of letters and small gifts to the nuns. The *torno* was meant to be one of the only methods of communication with the secular world.

Velo blanco: Literally, "white veil," the colonial term for women bringing a half-dowry to the convent. Women who wore the white veil were below the nuns of the black veil in the convent hierarchy, but were above *donadas*, servants, and slaves.

Velo negro: Literally, “black veil,” the colonial term for women bringing a full dowry to the convent. Nuns of the black veil were the aristocracy of the convent.

Vida común: The common life adhered to by the strict or discalced convents. It required the nuns to live and eat together and pool their resources for living costs.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the Spanish colonies, historical studies have shown that convents became integral parts of the cities in which they were founded. Convents were not only symbols of the moral beliefs and spiritual devotion of the conquistadors, but they were also symbols of wealth and prestige for the city and its founders. The influence and power of convents in the center of many colonial cities changed vastly over time. As the role of the church changed in the Andean republics, the convents which were dominant in the economy and society of developing cities, were either abandoned or became shadows of what they once were. This project has focused on one colonial convent that has remained a major symbol in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, for more than 400 years.

The city of Cuenca is located in the southern highland region of Ecuador (Figure 1). Founded in 1557 by the Spanish, the city was a minor urban center throughout the colonial period. Economically, the city depended on agricultural production throughout the colonial period and also functioned as a trade center between the coast and the highlands (Jamieson 2000:37). By the late 16th century, the city had gained sufficient resources to begin petitioning the Crown for permission to found a convent. In 1599, only 42 years after the founding of the city, the Inmaculada Concepción Convent was established. Over the course of the colonial period, the Concepción Convent became a

wealthy and powerful institution in the city. Like many colonial convents, the Concepción Convent of Cuenca became a landholder, creditor, and benefactor of many wealthy citizens. The economic power gained by most convents in the colonial period created a unique space for nuns and other women living in the convent. Although they were living under the same patriarchal rule as other women in the colonies, some religious women had the power to create an environment that was slightly detached from ecclesiastical authority. These women had opportunities and freedoms not available to other women in colonial society.



Figure 1. Map of Ecuador (after CIA 1991)

By the end of the colonial period, however, economic crisis and church reform severely curtailed the power of all factions of the church. The Concepción Convent was no exception. Economic hardship and church reform affected the convent throughout the

Republican period. The loss of economic power greatly reduced the freedoms and opportunities once available to the nuns and they were no longer able to enjoy an economically powerful position in society. Because of this loss in economic power, the Concepción nuns could no longer resist patriarchal and ecclesiastical authority. The convent not only became a poor institution, but the nuns were increasingly controlled by church authorities and their social power was suppressed.

This thesis is part of a larger project, the Cuenca Historical Archaeology Project¹, run by Dr. Ross Jamieson and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The purpose of this thesis is firstly to explore the material culture of the Concepción Convent to gain insight into how the institution functioned in society and secondly to examine the relationships of power and resistance going on within and outside the convent walls. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates how the archaeology of convents can add to the growing literature on colonial convents in historical research and the archaeology of female institutions.

In order to address the objectives of this project, I undertook research within the Concepción Convent of Cuenca between May and August of 2002. The research I conducted for this project included an archaeological excavation in the Convent Museum, an analysis of the excavated material, and an analysis of two other collections. These collections include previously excavated material from the convent, and the Concepción Museum collection. I was also able to undertake research in the city's notarial archives and an extensive secondary literature review. By examining the literature, material

¹ The Cuenca Historical Archaeology Project explored urban colonial archaeology and issues of identity in the southern highlands of Ecuador focusing on colonial domestic contexts. The project was a three-year SSHRC funded project which concluded in 2002.

culture, and architecture of the Concepción Convent, I explore how the women within this convent were able to express ideas of ethnicity, class, and economic power both within and outside the convent. In so doing, these women were able to create a space that was simultaneously detached from the patriarchy of colonial society and ingrained in the social, ethnic, and religious ideals of that society. Similarly, I examine how these expressions of power and resistance change over time and the causes and effects of this change.

This research has been influenced by a number of studies both in archaeology and history and encompasses a number of topics. The study of convents in archaeology is an area of the discipline that has not been fully explored. Gilchrist's (1993) work on medieval convents in England provided a model for my research. She discusses how convents can be used to understand the role of women in society. Similarly, her study shows how space, material culture, and landscape can be indicative of the types of social processes going on inside and outside convents. This study represents the only serious look into the archaeology of female religious institutions.

On the other hand, the archaeology of female institutions in British colonial society is an area of study that has developed recently and looks at the relationships of power and resistance inherent in these institutions (Casella 2001). Convents, however, have been left out of these studies. The same ideas used in the study of British colonial female institutions can be applied to female religious institutions in the Spanish colonies. The same processes of enclosure, reform, discipline, and religiosity are at work within each type of institution, but how these processes play out are very different.

The majority of information available about convents in colonial Latin America has come from studies in the historical literature. Studies such as Burns' (1999) work on the colonial convents of Cuzco, Peru, Lavrin's (1966, 1976, 1986) continuous work on the female religious in South America, Holler's (1998) work on nuns in Mexico City, and Paniagua Pérez' (1986, 1990) work on the religious institutions of Ecuador, have provided a context in which to place colonial convents. Understanding their treatment in the historical literature has allowed me to examine the material culture of convents from an informed perspective. These studies not only provide information about the major economic and social movements affecting religious institutions throughout the colonial period, they also provide a basis for comparison between the Concepción Convent of Cuenca and the larger institutions of Peru and Mexico.

Along with previous studies done on the colonial convents of Latin America, my research has also been informed by the archaeological work done by Jamieson (2000; 2001). Most historical archaeology done in Latin America has focused on large urban centers such as Mexico City. Jamieson's work represents the only published research on the historical archaeology of the Cuenca region and makes up a large portion of the information available on the historical archaeology of Ecuador. Because this work focuses on households of the Cuenca region, it provided a context in which to place my research.

The research project I have conducted on the Concepción Convent of Cuenca adds important information to the limited literature available on historical archaeology in Ecuador. Excavations at the Concepción Convent provide insight into the material culture of elite and wealthy institutions and how religious spaces compare to the archaeology of

households in the region. These excavations also add to the understanding of access to imported and elite items in a small urban center in the Andes. Similarly, this project demonstrates that the archaeological investigation of religious institutions can provide unique insights into social relationships of class, gender and ethnicity in colonial society. The archaeology of colonial convents in Latin America is an area of historical archaeology that has only begun to be explored. This study shows, however, that more work needs to be done on female religious institutions to gain a better understanding of how they functioned in society and how the study of material culture can add to the growing historical literature on colonial convents.

In the following chapters I outline the previous historical work done on colonial Latin American convents and place the Concepción Convent of Cuenca in the context of the historical literature. I also discuss the architectural development of the convent, the archaeological excavations conducted in the convent, and the analysis of material culture from the convent. By using the work of historians and archaeologists, I am able to place the material culture of the convent in its proper context and from that discuss the ways the nuns were expressing social, ethnic, and economic difference through the material culture that they used every day.

Chapter 2

Colonial Latin American Convents: Combining History, Archaeology, and the Study of Gender

Research into the archaeology of convents can be informed by studies done in Latin American history, the archaeology of female institutions, and the few studies done on convent archaeology. Historians have discussed the social and economic roles of the convent in colonial society and the influence convents had on the developing cities of Latin America (Burns 1999; Holler 1998; Lavrin 1966, 1976, 1986; Martín 1983). However these studies have generally lacked a discussion of material culture. The archaeology of female institutions, on the other hand, discusses the relationships of power within institutions and how these relationships are expressed through material culture. However, archaeologists have generally ignored the convent as a female institution, with the exception of Gilchrist's (1993) work on convents in Britain. In order to understand the focus of my research, it is important to discuss the treatment of convents in Latin American history, as well as the ideas and concepts used in the archaeological study of female institutions and how this can be applied to colonial convents.

The Convent in Colonial Latin America

Historical studies on Latin America have extensively examined the colonial period beginning with the arrival of Spanish conquistadores in the early 16th century and continuing through to constitutional Independence. Many historical studies on colonial convents have been conducted throughout Latin America focusing mostly on Peru and Mexico (Burns 1999; Holler 1998; Lavrin 1976, 1986; Martín 1983²). These studies have examined the founding of convents in urban centers, their economic and social role within the city, and the reproduction of the elite social classes through convents. The following is a discussion of how convents functioned within the cities of colonial Latin America, the influence they had on these cities, and the influence the developing cities had on convents and the women within them.

Vows of enclosure, poverty, chastity, and obedience

During the colonization of Latin America, the founding of a convent was an important element of new colonial cities. Convents were seen as beneficial to cities, as nuns were thought to set an example for society and promote religious practice (Lavrin 1986:168). Nuns were perceived as women who abandoned their families and worldly cares for the vows of "prayer, obedience, poverty, and chastity" (Lavrin 1986:168). These vows were an important element of religious life; however, they were often freely interpreted by the nuns and manipulated to their own uses.

² The work of Luis Martín provides well researched information on colonial convent life, but should be used with caution because of his somewhat romantic presentation of convents in colonial society.

One of the most important elements of the convent was the cloister. The cloister, as defined by *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, is "an enclosed space for religious retirement" (Herbermann et al. 1912:60). According to the *Periculoso* decree of Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 every order of nuns in the Latin Church were required to be enclosed or cloistered (Makowski 1997). Therefore, the convent had to be constructed in a way that the nuns could not look outside the cloister and the secular city could not see into the convent. The laws impose strict regulations on visitors able to enter into a cloistered convent and the types of interaction that can take place between nuns and visitors. Nuns may receive letters from friends and relatives and visitors are permitted in the convent parlour provided the nun remains behind the grating and, therefore, in enclosure. For visitors to enter the convent, permission from the bishop or the superior must be granted. However, in the case of confessors and ecclesiastical superiors, permission is generally not required (Herbermann, et al. 1912:61). The cloister, therefore, acted to restrict a nun's access to the outside world, restrict the lay person's access to religious life, and safeguard its inhabitants against temptation (Herbermann et al. 1912).

The cloistered convents of Spanish colonial cities, although all devoted to religious life, took two different paths. The larger convents of the cities, the *conventos grandes*, were popular institutions in the colonial period and often housed hundreds of women. The more strict or disalced branches of certain orders, such as the Capuchine or Carmelite convents, were smaller and admitted fewer women. The women of the more strict orders observed a much more rigid lifestyle and a higher degree of self-denial.

Lavrin (1986:174-175) states that:

Members of these branches wore woolen habits, ate sparingly in a communal refectory and out of one common kitchen, observed a greater

number of religious fasts, engaged in frequent personal discipline, and prayed longer hours than did their sisters in religion. The atmosphere of discalced convents was restrained and austere, demanding greater personal stamina and attracting fewer nuns. For their members, only through such tests of endurance was salvation ensured. Nuns of other orders did not feel, however, that they were less dedicated observants. They were assured by ecclesiastical authorities that there were many ways to reach God, and thus harmony was preserved within the body of the church.

The nuns of the discalced orders were very observant of their vows and served as examples of monastic life. However, to the colonial community all convents were seen as fine examples of women willing to give up their worldly possessions for mystic contemplation. For example, Diego de Mendoza, a chronicler of the 16th century Clares of Cuzco, Peru, praised the nuns "for their extreme personal asceticism and humility, set against a hopelessly Babylonian Cuzco of opulence, gold fever, and plenty" (Burns 1999:41). Although the discalced orders were more strict in their adherence to the religious vows of the nuns, all women professing in the convent were required to take the same vows. These vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were the solemn vows taken by all nuns and were written in to the constitutions of all Latin American convents as required by religious law (Makowski 1997).

In Spanish colonial cities, the convent was a monument of the ideal of religiosity that fascinated and intrigued the minds of lay people in the cities. Convents were urban institutions placed in the core of the city where they could have access to supporting services, such as a food supply and health services (Lavrin 1986:165). And yet their enclosure and seclusion separated them from the busy cities flourishing around them. The spatial organization of the convents helped to reinforce this idea of seclusion and yet still allowed for the nuns to gain some access to the world around them.

Architecture and Seclusion

Throughout the Spanish colonies, each convent differed greatly in its physical layout. However, most had common elements that helped to enforce the laws of enclosure. All convents had a church attached to the cloister which was open to the public. The nuns remained separate from the general congregation, however, and prayed in the *coro*, from which they could see the main altar and hear the mass but were separated from the church by grilles and curtains (Lavrin 1986:173). The cloisters of the convent were separated from the street by high fences. If the walls of the cloister abutted the street, the walls had few openings or windows so the nuns could remain hidden from the outside world.

The meeting places of the convent were the *porteria*, or entry room, and the *locutorio*. The *porteria* functioned as a place where the business of receiving food and services took place. It also functioned as the passage way through which confessors, servants, craftsmen and others went to reach the *locutorios*. The *locutorios* were the parlours and private offices where nuns could receive visitors, such as confessors or business agents (Martín 1983:176). In strict convents nuns remained behind a curtain in the *locutorios* so as not to break their seclusion. The *porteria* and *locutorios* were small areas of the convent which were able to control the access of lay people to the convent. Only certain people were allowed to enter the convent and movement of these visitors within the convent was greatly restricted.

The physical layout of convents, along with strict laws governing access, appear to have greatly restricted the interaction of nuns with the colonial cities around them. However, when looking closely at the types of interactions that occurred in the *locutorios*

and the kinds of businesses the nuns were involved in, it becomes clear that the nuns had a great deal of access to the secular city. Members of the secular community often met with the nuns in the *locutorios* to discuss business ventures and receive news about family and friends (Burns 1999:103). For example, in his discussion of the *conventos grandes* in Lima, Peru, Martín (1983) describes the events that occurred in some of the *locutorios*. He states:

Merchants arrived there with their wares, judges and royal officials came on official business, ladyfriends paid their visits to show the latest fashions and to share the latest gossip of the secular city, parents came to see their daughters, confessors and priests were entertained with music and songs, maids and black slaves delivered written and verbal messages... (Martín 1983:176).

The convents, as Martín romantically describes them, allowed for a great deal of interaction between the nuns and lay members of the community. Clearly the vows of enclosure were being reinterpreted by the nuns; demands made by religious authorities to stop these practices were completely disregarded. The music and entertainment that occurred in the *locutorios* continued throughout the colonial period in many convents despite attempts made by religious authorities to stop these "worldly" occurrences (Lavrin 1986:174).

Although the physical plans of the convents in colonial cities reinforced the vow of enclosure, it is clear that the nuns were able to use certain aspects of the convent to gain access to the community. These architectural elements of the convent were meant to restrict access to the outside world; however, the nuns used the space they were given as a meeting place to maintain relationships with their friends and family and also conduct business transactions with *mayordomos* or managers of their various business affairs.

Economy and Society

In order to get a better understanding of the interaction that occurred between convents and the cities that surrounded them and the types of business transactions that took place in the *locutorios*, it is important to look at the economic role of convents in colonial society. Not only were convents an important source of capital within colonial cities, but they also became prominent rural and urban landowners. The source of the convents' economic power came from a variety of resources, including the dowry, pious donations, and the convent's relationship with the elite members of society.

In Spanish colonial society, the marriage of a young woman to a man of equal status was an important aspect of maintaining the social status of the family (Lavrin 1976:252). The two institutions that were most effective in ensuring the status of women, and their families, were the dowry and the foundation of convents. "Dowries were required from any woman of social distinction whenever she 'took state' (*tomar estado*), and all women were expected to take state; that is, to marry or to profess, since spinsterhood was ill-regarded" (Lavrin 1976:253). The majority of convents in Spanish colonial cities required a substantial dowry in order for a woman to profess, although some of the more disalced convents were willing to take a limited number of poor women. For example, in colonial Mexico the usual dowry of a professing nun was 2000 pesos in the late 16th century and 3000 in the 17th century (Lavrin 1976:256). The dowries in Peru during these time periods were similar with 3312 pesos the required amount in the early 17th century (Burns 1999:62). Along with the dowry, it was required that a novice's living expenses be covered until she professed (Lavrin 1976:256). Because of the required dowry and other expenses involved in convent life, access to convents was

often restricted to the elite, as poor women could not afford the necessary costs. These restrictions often led to convents becoming elite institutions.

Along with the required dowries of professing nuns, the convents also gained capital through charitable or pious donations and wills (Burns 1999:62). Members of society who had the funds often gave large sums of money to convents, as a convent was seen as a reflection of the glory of God as well as an indicator of the wealth of the city (Lavrin 1986:169). Supporting a religious institution provided patrons with a great amount of social prestige in colonial society. Patrons could demand special privileges from the nuns, such as masses for their own souls and those of their families and the right of burial in the convent church. Convents also received large sums of money through inheritance from families and benefactors of the nuns (Burns 1999:62).

The economic status of convents put them in a unique position in society. Many cities suffered from a severe lack of capital throughout the colonial period. Banks were unknown institutions in colonial Spanish America as the moral laws of usury restricted the development of such institutions. The sin of usury was defined as lending money at interest (Burns 1999:64). The church considered lending money at interest almost as immoral as homosexuality. Burns (1999:64) explains that

...the Catholic church considered homosexual acts barren and 'against nature,' a sinful contravention of the reproductive purpose of sex. Something similar was at the root of the usury prohibition: money, in the scholastics' conception, was also barren. Therefore, for money to reproduce itself through lending at interest was, in the eyes of Thomas Aquinas and others, *contra natura*, against nature.

Religious institutions circumvented the laws of usury through the use of an investment strategy known as *censos*. This form of economic arrangement was similar to the modern mortgage; the borrower paid a percent of the principal per year to the institution until the

agreement was cancelled or the principal repaid. As Burns (1999:64) points out "the monastery did not enter into loans, but rather contracts of purchase and sale in which the nuns purchased the right to collect an annuity."

Beginning early in the colonial period, convents began investing their capital in rural and urban land and also providing credit to local borrowers through *censos* (liens) (Burns 1999:42-43). For example, the convent of Santa Clara in Cuzco in 1565 held three liens against certain people's property; by 1582-1586, the number of liens jumped to 18. As Burns (1999:43) states, "by the turn of the [17th] century, income from *censos* accounted for around 43 percent of the yearly income of Santa Clara, and the convent was well on its way to becoming one of the largest creditors, as well as one of the largest landowners, in the Cuzco region." Similarly, in Mexico city, the *censos* that the convents extended to property owners provided the convents with 10 to 30 percent of their annual income (Lavrín 1976:262-263).

The economic activities of the convents in colonial cities created a strong relationship between the nuns and the wealthy members of society. The landowning families that provided the convent with a large number of professing nuns also held the kinds of "assets that the nuns were seeking as collateral for the investment of their censo funds" (Burns 1999:69). Increasingly, the nuns tended to concentrate the *censos* in the hands of the few elite members of society, such as landowners, merchants, wealthy priests, and noblemen (Lavrín 1976:263). The relationship between the convents and the wealthy not only reinforced the social order of colonial society, but also provided the nuns with a safe, steady income (Burns 1999:69).

The role that convents played in the economy of colonial society demonstrates the interaction necessary between the nuns and a wide variety of people in the outside world. Most convents had a *mayordomo*, or business manager, who "acted as buyer and seller on behalf of the convent, managed its investments and properties, and officially represented the nunnery in all its dealings with ecclesiastical and civil bureaucrats" (Martín 1983:224). Individual nuns also had advisors and agents who represented them in outside personal affairs. These agents, managers, and administrators met with nuns in the *locutorios* in order to conduct business and pass on information (Lavrin 1986:173). Members of the community also came to the *locutorios* to request loans from the convent. The nuns,

in pursuit of their economic interest, ...gathered information on properties for sale, *vecinos* who needed loans, the affairs of their tenants in the city or the countryside, the state of supplies of foodstuffs for the city, and the price of such commodities as cloth, wood, stone, wax, and produce. They also took note of the salaries paid to workers and artisans, from whom they commissioned everything from portraits, paintings, and altars to iron grilles and fireworks (Lavrin 1986:182).

Although the nuns were cloistered, the economic affairs that the convent and individual nuns were involved in brought them into direct contact with the outside world as creditors and landlords. These economic activities affected the lives of the nuns and also had a major impact on the economic development of the cities around them.

Elite Spanish Institutions

Life in colonial society was governed by complex rules of ethnic and racial relationships (Socolow 1986:7). Elite colonial society was made up of ethnically Spanish or *criollo* families that maintained their ethnic difference from those of indigenous or

mestizo descent. The economic activities of the convents in colonial society reflect the relationship between the convents and the elite members of society. This relationship is clear in that the larger convents were elite institutions which reinforced the dominant position of the *criollo* in colonial society. In looking at the rules regarding who was allowed to profess in the convent and the hierarchies within convents, it is clear that the nuns of colonial convents sought to recreate the relationships of race and ethnicity prevalent in colonial society.

The convents of colonial cities had strict rules governing who was allowed to profess in the convent. As Lavrin (1976:252) points out, "as with their male counterparts, the place of Spanish women in the colonial economy was directly related to their political role as conquerors and their ethnic origins, as a tiny group of white people in a world of conquered Indians." In order to maintain the social supremacy of Spanish and *criolla* women in colonial society, the legal concept of racial superiority was preserved by the elite, as well as the notion of religious purity. With this came the institution of the dowry, as mentioned previously, as well as other requirements for those women wishing to profess. These restrictions required that

...a novice had to be of perfect Spanish ancestry and born within wedlock. Her certificate of birth, where her race was stated, and the notarized statement of several witnesses were required as supporting evidence. These requirements eliminated the chances of professing for women of some remote Jewish ancestry and for all Indians and mixed bloods (Lavrin 1976:257).

These exclusionary requirements reflected the beliefs and practices of the outside world and turned convents into elitist institutions.

Although it was required by the church for a novice to be born within wedlock, the illegitimacy of a novice could be, and was occasionally, ignored. If the child had been

raised in a well-to-do family and had the support of those in good social standing, the girls "defect of birth" could be absolved by religious authorities, therefore allowing the girl to profess (Lavrin 1976:257). As in the case of the Santa Clara convent in Cuzco, the convent was founded specifically for the purpose of providing a space for the *mestiza* children of noblemen of the city (Burns 1999). However, soon after the founding of the convent, the nuns of pure Spanish blood drew a distinction between themselves and the *mestizas* by not permitting the *mestiza* women to wear the black veil. According to Burns (1999:32), "in Iberian cloisters the black veil distinguished professed nuns from novices and servants, who wore a white veil." Therefore, in colonial convents the nuns were using the colours of the veil to signify the *mestiza* nuns as permanent novices and in so doing were imposing a hierarchy within the convent based on racial superiority. In the case of Santa Clara in Cuzco, the convent was initially founded for the *mestiza* children of the *cabildo*, yet the hierarchical division between Spanish and non-Spanish women would remain part of convent life for centuries (Burns 1999:33).

The hierarchies of nuns within the convent directly reflected the racial beliefs of the outside world. Within the large convents of colonial cities the nuns of the black veil remained the elite members of society. Martín (1983:179) describes the convents as

an aristocratic pyramid of unequals, clustered into rigidly defined and mutually exclusive social classes: nuns of the black veil, nuns of the white veil, novices, *donadas*,...secular ladies in retirement, schoolgirls and babies, servants and maids, and at the bottom of the pyramid, the slaves of the convent.

The nuns of the black veil were the aristocracy of the convent. They voted in the convent elections, were excluded from menial work within the convent, were well educated, and came from the most prestigious families in the city. Most importantly, however, nuns of

the black veil were permitted to have their own private possessions, private cells, purchased for them by their families, and servants and slaves (Gibbs 1989:346; Martín 1983:180-181).

The nuns of the white veil, on the other hand, were religious women who were not of "proper" ancestry or who could not afford a full dowry to become a nun of the black veil. These nuns included Spanish and *criolla* women as well as *mestizas*. They often assumed jobs within the convent such as "gardeners; infirmarians, bakers,... supervisors of kitchens and laundry rooms, buyers, aids of the different officers of the nunnery, and directors of *donadas*, maids, and slaves" (Martín 1983:184). Nuns of the white veil rarely owned their own cells and usually lived in the communal rooms of the convent. As Martín (1983:185) states, "in the canonical sense, they were true nuns, bound by religious vows and subject in virtue of them to all the rules of the nunnery. The difference between the nuns of the white and the black veil was more social and economic than legal."

The *donadas* took a lower rank in convent life. Although they led the life of a nun, they were not nuns in the canonical sense and never took vows recognized by the church. Rather, the *donadas* were "exalted maids who were allowed to live as 'imitators of nuns'" (Martín 1983:185). The *donadas* were usually poor and illiterate women whose tasks included assisting the nuns of the white veil.

All women who wore the veil of a nun, including *donadas*, were required to spend a year as a novice. The novices of the convent were segregated from the rest of the community and were under the direction of a mistress (Burns 1999:108). Once the novice proved herself competent for religious life, she was allowed to become part of the

convent community. It is interesting to note that all women who wore the veil in the convent, nuns of the black veil, nuns of the white veil, and *donadas*, were required to undergo the same novitiate process. And yet after the year of segregation, the women were separated strictly by their class or socioeconomic background. The life of a nun within the convent was directly related to her status in the outside world. Therefore, although the women were separated from the world around them, convent life was a direct reflection of the beliefs of colonial society through divisions of class, race, and ethnicity.

In looking at the hierarchies of women within colonial convents, it is important to discuss the large community of servants and slaves which were a major part of convent life. Martín (1983:187) points out that at the peak of the *conventos grandes* in 17th century Peru, the convents listed hundreds of women as servants and slaves. Considering the nuns of the black veil were all members of elite society, it is not surprising that these women were permitted to bring their servants with them into the convent. This large group of women formed the lowest ranks in the convent. Within this group there was further distinction depending on whether they were free or slaves, black, *mestiza*, Indian, or *criolla* (Martín 1983:189-190). These women were not required to take vows and in some cases were permitted to leave the convent on errands (Martín 1983:191). Many of these women also joined the convent after spending most of their life in the city. The slaves and servants provided a way for the nuns to replicate the hierarchies that were prevalent throughout colonial cities and also provided the nuns with a connection to the secular world.

The hierarchies which existed in secular society were replicated in the convent by the nuns of the black veil. Although the vows taken by these women required them to lead a life of poverty, obedience, chastity, and enclosure, it is clear that these vows were freely interpreted by the nuns to suit their needs. Not only were nuns of the black veil able to replicate their position in society within the convent, they were also able to use their economic and social status for their own benefit. Nuns of the black veil often held office in the convent administration allowing them to have a voice in how the convent was run, how their money was spent, and who they were lending to (Lavrin 1986). These women had the ability to conduct business affairs not only for their own personal gain, but also to help increase their families' wealth and influence and help the convent increase its wealth and power. The vow of poverty that all nuns took was interpreted in ways which allowed nuns of the black veil the freedom to take part in these business ventures under the pretext that it was for the benefit of the convent. Although it seems that the vows of poverty were constantly being broken and disregarded, the secular city did not see the nuns in this manner. Therefore in the context of colonial society, the nuns of the black veil had room to reinterpret their vows in ways which not only benefited society, but also benefited the economic position of colonial convents and the nuns within.

Many of the convents in Spanish colonial cities were founded in order to provide a space for the elite women of the society. These women clearly made up the aristocracy of conventual life and had almost total control over the affairs of the convent. Although there were walls around the convent that restricted the access of nuns to the secular

world, it is clear that this segregation did not stop the elite of society from reinforcing their status of racial superiority.

The treatment of colonial convents in historical research, as discussed, has focused on the economic and social aspects of convents in colonial society. These studies provide details about the economic workings of ecclesiastical institutions, the roles of the convent in colonial society, and the lives of women within these institutions. This information is necessary to understand how the institutions worked in the colonies and how the institutions changed over time. However, studies in Latin America have focused mainly on archival research and documentary sources and have not discussed how material culture can add to our understanding of women's lives within the convent. The study of female institutions in archaeology, as well as the few archaeological studies of convents, can provide useful information on how material culture can enhance our understanding of the lives of women within convents and the role of convents in colonial society.

The Archaeology of Female Institutions

The study of female institutions in archaeology is a relatively new field that has developed through gender and feminist archaeology (see Casella 2001; De Cunzo 2001; Spencer-Wood 2001). The study of these institutions is informed by gender archaeology in a number of ways. Archaeologists studying female institutions do not assume that women placed in institutions were passive recipients of their enclosure; rather, these women actively interpreted their enclosure and maintained active relationships with their environment. The studies done on female institutions have mainly focused on women's

prisons and workhouses in the British colonies. Convents have been ignored as female institutions. The archaeology of convents is an area that has been generally ignored throughout the world, with the exception of the work done by Gilchrist (1993) in Britain. I will provide a brief discussion of gender archaeology, the archaeology of female institutions, and the work done by Gilchrist, in order to show how these different areas of archaeology have informed my research.

Gender archaeology is an area of the discipline that has only developed in the last 20 years and grew out of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The initial goal of gender studies in archaeology began with exposing the androcentric bias that was inherent in all social sciences, including archaeology. This bias was clearly identified and criticised in Conkey and Spector's 1984 article "Archaeology and the Study of Gender." From this revolutionary article, the field of gender archaeology developed into studies focused on reinterpreting the gender roles of the past and how these roles are expressed through material culture (see Gilchrist 1999, Nelson 1997, Wylie 1991). Gender archaeologists are interested in difference and complementarity between men and women, and among men and women of different ethnicities, sexualities, and classes. They are also interested in individual agency and how people express their individual relationships, ideologies, and identities (Spencer-Wood 2001).

The archaeology of female institutions has developed out of the work done in feminist and gender archaeology. The major focus of these studies has been on women's work houses, female prisons, and reform institutions and how the women within these institutions understood and interpreted their incarceration or enclosure (Casella 2001; De Cunzo 2001; Pidcock 2001). At the core of these studies is the "dynamic interaction

between the reformers and the inmates" and how this relationship is expressed through landscape, architecture, and material culture (Spencer-Wood and Baugher 2001:14). All of the studies done on reform institutions place the institution in cultural and historical context in order to understand the perceptions of female gender roles, poverty, crime, and reform. The institutions include both prisons, where enclosure is involuntary, and reform houses, in which women chose to enter for a set period of time. For example the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia (1845-1916) studied by De Cunzo (2001) was a home for "fallen" women which attempted to reform the women entering through discipline, enclosure, moral teachings, and domestic service. During the late 19th century both the reformers and inmates took meals together as a demonstration of adherence to family values; however, different types of ceramics wares were used at the table to signify difference in class between the reformers and the inmates (De Cunzo 2001). Similarly, in the Ross Female Factory studied by Casella (2001:60) archaeological work suggests that the use of forbidden and illicit items by prisoners demonstrates an active resistance to the institution that controlled their lives. In all of these cases, the material culture, landscape, and architecture demonstrate the relationships and power struggles between the women in the institution and their reformers and they also show how cultural perceptions of various female gender roles, such as reform, crime, sexuality, and poverty, change over time.

In looking at the types of institutions being studied in the recent research, it is clear that convents could be included as a type of female institution. Although Spanish colonial convents are voluntary institutions and were generally not poor institutions, they did require enclosure and a certain amount of discipline and reform through vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Similar to the female institutions of the British colonies,

the women in Latin American convents were constantly negotiating their place within the convent and the rules that governed their lives.

Although historical research on convents of the New World has been extensive, the archaeology of these institutions has been minimal. The only excavations of Latin American convents that have been reported on have been salvage excavations in Mexico City (Escobedo Ramírez et al. 1995, Fournier García 1990). In Europe, however, some work has been done on medieval nunneries, most notably by Roberta Gilchrist. In her book *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (1993), Gilchrist examines landscape, architecture, and material culture in order to understand how women's monasteries in England differed from male monasteries and how gender is represented through these elements. Through her study, Gilchrist (1993) concludes that nunneries in medieval England were not "less successful" as is generally believed in historical research, rather the nunneries were set up differently on the landscape, were architecturally dissimilar, and had different connections to social classes than male monastic orders. The nunneries were never built in a manner conducive to self-sufficiency, unlike the male orders, and it was never expected of them, as they had the support of the local gentry. Gilchrist also argues that the women in the nunneries had agency and their seclusion was sometimes a product of this agency. The study done by Gilchrist is useful to my research as this work demonstrates the misconceptions of nunneries in medieval historic research. It is clear that through an examination of material culture, architecture, and landscape, information about the lives of women within the convent, their relationships with the society in which they were situated, and how these relationships changed over time, can be better understood and more thoroughly analysed.

Conclusion

Historical work done on Latin American colonial convents provides researchers with useful information about how convents functioned in colonial cities and their social and economic role in society. This information can be used along with work done in archaeology to better understand the lives of women within the convent and how their relationships with the outside world were reflected in their material culture. Studies of female institutions in the British colonies show that there were complex relationships between the inmates and their reformers and these relationships were expressed through material culture and landscape. The relationship of power and resistance can also be applied to the women within Spanish colonial convents to understand the relationships between the colonial city and the convent, the ecclesiastical authorities and the convent, and also between the different classes of women within the convent.

Chapter 3

History of the Inmaculada Concepción Convent

As the population of Spanish and *criolla* women grew in the Americas, the perceived need for religious houses for women became increasingly important to many Spanish settlers. Religious orders of women had many functions in society, as discussed in the previous chapter, and their development as powerful and wealthy institutions occurred differently in various parts of the colonies (Burns 1999). The prosperity of the convent depended greatly on the resources and size of the city in which it was founded. The Concepción Convent of Cuenca, Ecuador, was a relatively small institution in the Audiencia of Quito. However, the same processes of prosperity and decline that occurred in other parts of Spanish America affected the Concepción nuns of Cuenca. This chapter discusses the specific development of the Concepción Convent of Cuenca and how the convent has reacted to periods of both prosperity and decline over the last 400 years.

The Beginning of Female Religious Institutions in Spanish America

The first female religious institutions to develop in the New World were *beaterios*, institutions which functioned much like convents; however, the women within

were not required to take ecclesiastical vows and the institutions were not formally recognized by the church (Martín 1983:294). Soon after these institutions became prevalent in colonial cities, the desire for more prestigious female religious houses developed. Along with this, members of society began to recognize the "social problem" of the growing number of unmarried Spanish women in society. From this came the desire to transform *beaterios* into convents for elite Spanish women. The first order of religious women to arrive in the New World from Spain was the Conceptionist order (Lavrín 1986:166; Muriel de la Torre 1943; Paniagua Pérez 1990). In 1541, the first convent of this order was erected in Mexico (Muriel de la Torre 1943:23) and the order spread rapidly through the New World, moving to Lima in 1573 and to Quito in 1577 (Leiva Viacava 1995:320; Paniagua Pérez 1990:564).

The Founding of the Conceptionist Order

The Conceptionist order was a popular institution in colonial Latin America. Being a relatively new order in the church, it was viewed as less corrupt and less in need of reform than the well established orders which were constantly under investigation by the Inquisition (Paniagua Pérez 1990). The Conceptionist order was instituted in Toledo, Spain, by St. Beatriz de Silva in 1484 (Herbermann et al. 1912:190). St. Beatriz was a Portuguese noblewoman who went to Castile with her kinswoman, Isabel, who was to marry John II of Castile (Severino de Santa Teresa 1954). According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912), the queen became suspicious and jealous of the beautiful Beatriz and imprisoned the young woman. Beatriz managed to escape and fled to the Sisters of St. Dominic at Toledo. She lived with the Sisters for about 40 years until she founded,

along with 12 other nuns, a special order devoted to the Immaculate Conception of Mary (Herbermann et al. 1912:190). Beatriz died in 1490 before the order was sanctioned by Pope Julius II in 1511 (Severino de Santa Teresa 1954).

Although the Conceptionist convent began as an independent institution, Canon Law required all religious orders of women to be under the rule of a male religious order for spiritual and administrative assistance (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990). In the case of the Conceptionists, the order was formed without an associated male order and was, therefore, subordinated to the Franciscans by Pope Julius II. The constitution of the order was developed with the help of the Franciscans in 1516, and later the Sisters of Saint Clare adopted their rules (Herbermann, et al. 1912:190).

Conceptionists in the New World

The Conceptionist order first came to the New World in 1541 with the foundation of the Concepción convent in Mexico City (Muriel de la Torre 1943:23). The order quickly expanded their influence by founding convents in cities throughout all of Latin America. The first Conceptionist convent in the Audiencia of Quito was the Monasterio de la Limpia Concepción founded in the city of Quito in 1577 (Paniagua Pérez 1990:564). The founding of the convent took almost two years to realize as nuns from Spain were required to run the institution. Five nuns arrived from Spain on December 30, 1576, including María de Jesús Taboada, a relative of the first bishop of Quito, and a novice who would come to be known as Mariana de Jesús, the most celebrated quiteña nun (Paniagua Pérez 1990:564). With the permission of the bishop, the first convent of

Quito opened its doors the following January with 11 *doncellas* (young noblewomen) and two widows.

After the founding of the convent in Quito, demand grew for more convents throughout the Audiencia. In the following 30 years, Conceptionist convents were founded in San Juan de Pasto, Loja, Riobamba, and Cuenca (Paniagua Pérez 1990).

The building of a convent in colonial Latin American cities was an important process that brought prestige to the city and its citizens. In the 16th century, the founding of a convent was an important part of a city's development as it demonstrated the spirituality and morality of the new city. Early foundations were often motivated by the *cabildo* and supported heavily by almsgiving (Holler, personal communication 2003). However, in order for a foundation to be realized, financial support by both the church, the citizens of the city, and the *cabildo* was required. The Crown would only grant permission for a foundation if the convent had secure financial support (Lavrin 1986). Although the Crown provided some support for monasteries, either temporarily or perpetually, eventually the main benefactors or patrons of convents were the wealthy citizens of the city.

The Inmaculada Concepción Convent of Cuenca

The founding of the Cuenca Concepción Convent in 1599 was a process that began in the late 16th century (Paniagua Pérez 1990:576). Towards the end of the 16th century the wealthy landowners and aristocracy of Cuenca had gained enough capital to invest in the foundation of a convent and began to petition the bishop and the king for

permission. This process began as early as 1563 when a citizen of Cuenca named Juan Mexía de Balderrama collected alms from parishioners to found a chapel of nuns of the Inmaculada Concepción Order (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:31). However, it was not until June 24, 1599 that the city received a license from the Crown to found the convent (Paniagua Pérez 1990:576).

In order to acquire a license to build the convent, the city had to prove they were able to provide it with financial support. In a letter written to the president of the Real Audiencia of Quito, a Jesuit priest, Juan de Frias Herrán, described the donations and houses that had been given for the founding of the convent. He stated that the city had amassed 4000 to 5000 pesos, plus a donation of 600 *ducados*³ from the Viceroy Marqués de Cañete (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:32; Paniagua Pérez 1990:576). Along with this income, Herrán describes the houses which were donated to the foundation by Doña Leonor Ordóñez, a prestigious widow of the city. In her will she left all her houses, livestock, and *haciendas* for the foundation of the convent on the condition that her three daughters be accepted into the monastery to profess as nuns (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:32; Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:15).

The location of the convent within the city was important, as proximity to the central plaza gave the convent access to necessary amenities. The Spanish church considered it dangerous and corrupting to have convents located in rural or isolated areas (Lavrin 1986:165-166); therefore, the houses donated by Doña Leonor were important to the foundation as they provided a large area for the nuns to inhabit, close to the central plaza of the city (Figure 2). According to archival documents, the land owned by Doña

³ A *ducado* is a monetary value used in the Spanish colonies. It is a 23 ¼ K gold coin equal to 375 *maravedis* (the basic unit of currency). The peso is equal to 450 *maravedis* (Cook and Cook 1991:161).

Leonor was inherited from her husband Benito de Mendaña, treasurer for the *cabildo*, and was made up of four *solares* or one city block valued at 4250 pesos (Archivo Histórico Municipal de Cuenca (AHM/C) *Libro de la Fundación*, fol. 24v-, cited in Chacón Zhapan 1990:471-72).

With the license from the king and a location to house the convent, bishop Fray Luis López de Solís came from Quito to take possession of the houses and establish the convent. Because there were no convents within the city of Cuenca, three Conceptionist nuns came from Quito to begin the community: Magdalena de San Juan as abbess, Leonor de la Trinidad as curate, and Catalina del Espíritu Santo as the third professed nun (Paniagua Pérez 1990:577).

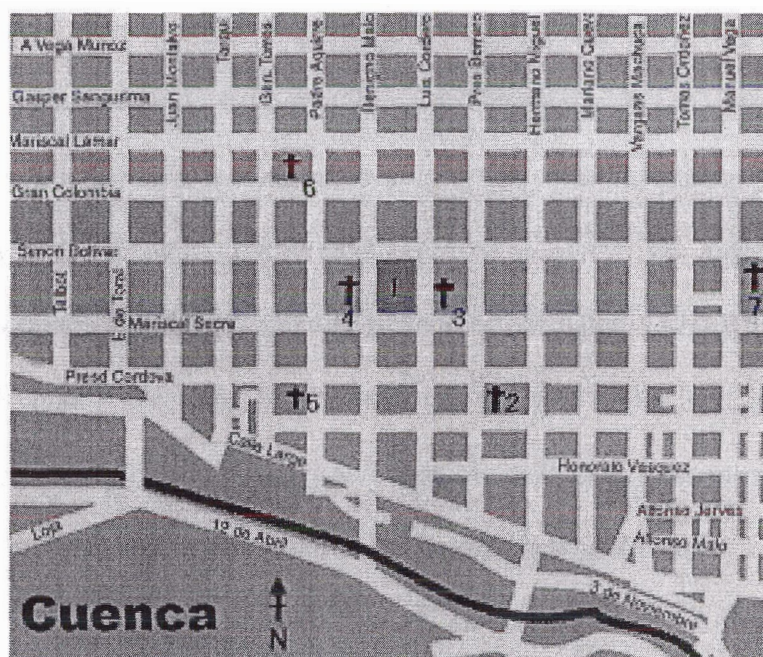


Figure 2. Map of Downtown Cuenca.

1. Central Plaza, 2. Concepción Convent, 3. Old Cathedral, 4. New Cathedral, 5. San Francisco Church, 6. Santo Domingo Church, 7. San Blas Church

Economic Development of the Convent

As with most colonial convents, the Conceptionists of Cuenca relied on community donations, dowries from women entering the convent, and *censos* for economic support. The nuns were able to invest this money and increase their economic power and influence. Convents often played an important role in the city's economy both as landowners and as lending institutions (Burns 1999). The Concepción convent in Cuenca was no exception. The economic development of the convent demonstrates how the Conceptionists came to be a major influence on the developing city of Cuenca.

Permission from the king to found a convent assumed that the institution would eventually become self-sufficient and no longer need the support of the Crown. Soon after the establishment of the convent, on September 9, 1600, the Viceroy granted tribute from *encomiendas*⁴ in Latacunga, Alangasí, Pomasqui (located near Ibarra, see Figure 1), and Cuenca to the convent (Archivo Histórico del Monasterio de la Concepción de Cuenca (AHMC/C), *Libro de la Fundación*, fols. 10-12, cited in Chacón Zhapan 1990:471). Later, in 1601, a large tract of land (120 *cuadras*) in San José (Figure 3) was donated to the convent for its maintenance to be used until 1646 (AHMC/C doc. 352, fol.2, cited in Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:16). This land and tribute allowed the nuns to begin accumulating an economic base from which they could expand their property holdings and income in order to become self-sufficient.

⁴ *Encomiendas* are towns or small populations of native people who are required by the Spanish Crown to pay tribute to the *encomendero* in the form of labour and agricultural goods. In this case the *encomendero* was the Concepción Convent.

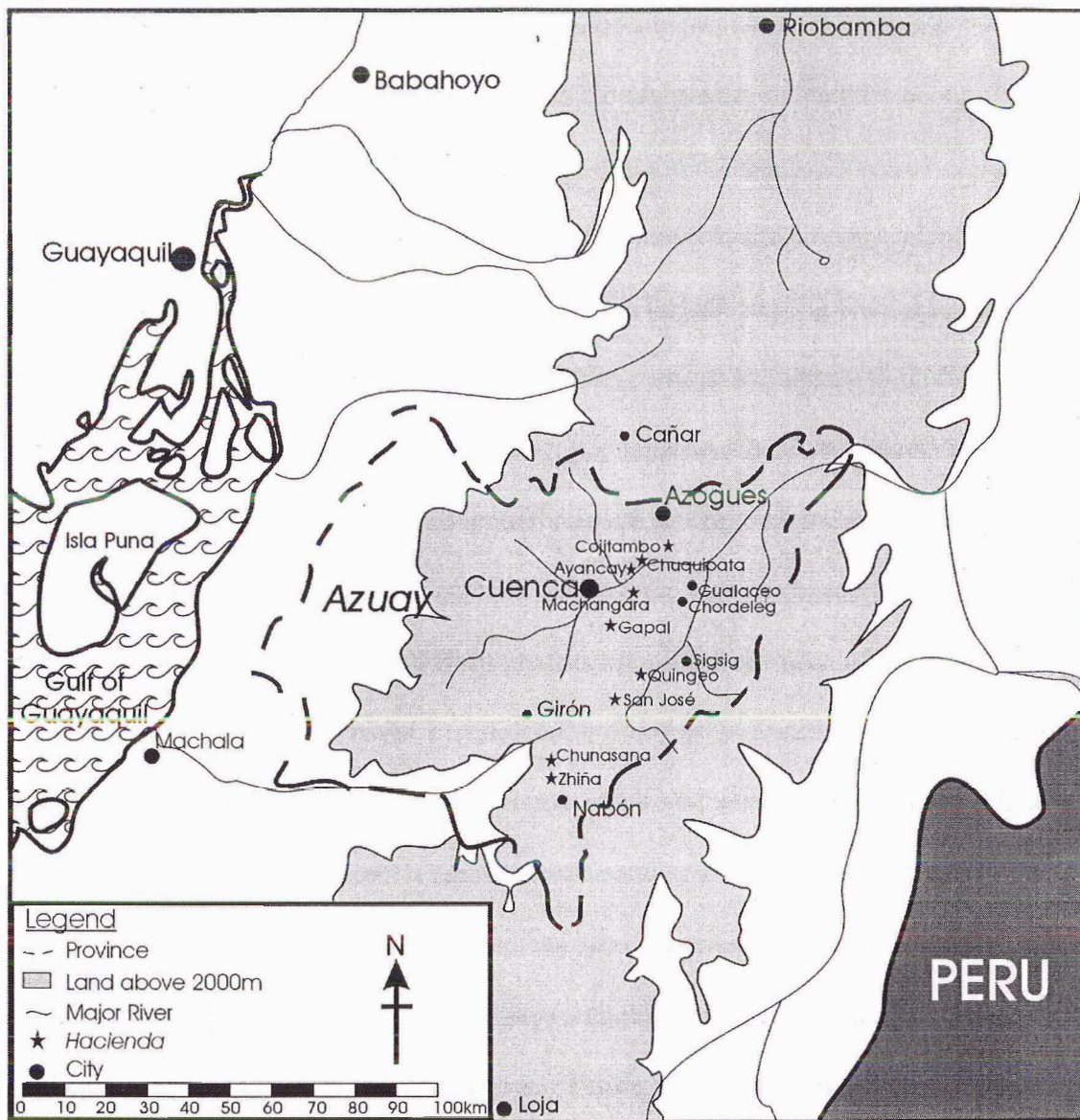


Figure 3. Map of *Haciendas* Owned by the Concepción Convent (after IGME 1991)

Land and money donated to the convent had to be managed by a male outside party as the nuns were not permitted to leave the convent for business dealings. The *cabildo* assigned Captain Francisco de Cabrera Godoy as the first *mayordomo* of the convent (Chacón Zhapan 1990:474). The *mayordomo* played an important role in the economic affairs of the nuns by "staking their claims, overseeing their finances, presenting their petitions, handling their lawsuits, and generally representing their causes

to the relevant authorities" (Burns 1999:48). According to Chacón Zhapan (1990:474), the hard work and dedication of Cap. Cabrera Godoy greatly helped the economic development of the convent as he managed the donations from the Viceroy and the tribute from the encomiendas. Soon after his assignment to the convent, Cap. Cabrera Godoy was able to acquire the tribute rights to four *caballerías*⁵ in Gualaceo for the convent (Chacón Zhapan 1990:474). By 1646 the convent had obtained land around Cuenca in San José, Machángara, Ayancay, and Gapal worth 27,740 pesos (Figure 3) (AHMC/C doc. 352, fol. 3, cited in Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:16).

Along with the acquisition of land, the convent also increased its economic strength through dowries required from professing nuns. The value of the dowry depended on what the citizens of the city could afford as well as the position of the nun within the convent. The dowry for nuns of the black veil to enter the convent in Cuenca was 1000 pesos in the 17th and 18th centuries (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:18). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the larger cities, such as Mexico City and Lima, required dowries for nuns of the black veil that were twice or three times as much as the Concepción Convent. The dowries for nuns of the white veil, a lower class of nun within the convent, was generally half of the regular dowry. Secular women and students within the convent were also required to pay a monthly fee for their maintenance (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990). The dowries given to the convent were meant for personal maintenance and upkeep of the professing nun; however, dowry money was often invested by the convent or by the nun herself in order to increase the

⁵ A *caballería* is a measure of land, about 105 acres or 43 hectares in size (Wood 1998:96).

income for the nuns. By 1719 the convent had received 67,500 pesos in cash from dowries (Chacón Zhapan 1990:474).

Although the convent preferred cash dowries, they also accepted payments in the form of land, livestock, or *censos*. The archival documents in the Concepción Convent provide a number of examples of the types of financial negotiations for the settlement of a dowry payment. On December 19, 1601, Juan Péres Hurtado placed a *censo* on a property he had purchased for 1000 pesos in order to provide his daughter, Bárbara de San Pedro, with a dowry for the convent. The *censo* required an interest payment of 71 pesos be given to the convent every year (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:41). In another example a young woman named María de Soria y Miralles wanted to enter the convent in 1662, but she was not of the proper age to profess. Because she was the only heir to her mother's property, she used her inheritance as a dowry. Her inheritance included a city block with houses and a property of 50 *cuadras* or blocks in Cojitambo (Figure 3). Another property of eight *cuadras*, in Chuquipata, was also listed in the inheritance and included 20 oxen, six mules, 500 head of sheep, plus the service of four Indians for agricultural work, one Indian as a shepherd, and two slaves. She was accepted into the convent as a novice in 1667 (AHMC/C fol. 33, cited in Chacón Zhapan 1990:475).

The dowries provided a substantial income for the convent which was often invested or lent in order to increase the wealth of the institution. The convent was also well supported by the city through donations and *capellanías* or chantries. Becoming a patron of a religious institution was highly regarded in colonial society (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990; Lavrin 1986). Donations were frequently made in wills and testaments and the donor often requested the founding of a *capellania*. These chantries

were “a type of endowment which usually required the recipient to say a certain number of masses for the soul of the donor or donor's family” (Gibbs 1989:353). Endowments helped to fund the costs of masses and religious festivals and sometimes worked as payments for having the deceased buried within the convent church (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:26). One example from the city's archives is the will and testament of Brigida de Ulloa, dated November 23, 1639, who stated that she wanted to be buried in the lower choir of the Concepción church. Her will lists her personal possessions and asks that they be sold and the money donated to the convent. Her possessions included jewelry, gold ornaments, textiles, and two slaves. The document lists the selling prices of all these items, including the two slaves, with the donation totaling over 800 pesos (Archivo Nacional de Historia/Cuenca (ANH/C) L509 ff17r-28v).

The convent's economic power grew throughout the colonial period as the nuns expanded their land holdings and real estate and prospered from agricultural production. With this income the convent was able to invest in the development of the city of Cuenca, through loans and *censos*, and also to develop and expand its own property in the city (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990).

Period of Prosperity for the Convent

From the middle of the 17th century through to the middle of the 18th century, the Concepción Convent had periods of high prosperity. This was fuelled by the dowries and donations given to the convent as well as a system of loans and *censos* which allowed the convent to invest its funds in the city and receive an annual income in return. The

prosperity of the convent allowed the nuns to improve their own property and to further expand their land holdings and economic income.

The Concepción Convent became an important lending institution within the city as did most convents during the colonial period. The system of lending money from the coffers of ecclesiastical institutions was prevalent throughout the Spanish colonies, as discussed in Chapter 2. The lending of money not only benefited citizens of Cuenca, but also provided the Concepción Convent with an annual income from the interest payments made on the loans. Bills for collection of *censos* between the years of 1692 and 1703 demonstrate that during the 17th century the nuns expanded their economic influence and activities to the cities of Ibarra, Quito, Ambato, Latacunga (Figure 1), Riobamba, and Babahoyo (Figure 3) (AHMC/C 2-7; 2-10, cited in Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:27).

The economic power that developed throughout the 17th century allowed the convent to transform its physical presence within the city. The convent's economic power was displayed to the city through the building of the second convent church, which began in April of 1712 and was finished eight years later (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981). Construction of the church was ordered by the abbess Madre Sebastiana de San Juan along with the construction of the sacristy and primary cloister. The cost of the construction was partly taken care of by the Mother Superior as is documented in the archival records stating "These works could be made because she [Sebastiana de San Juan] was very rich and all her abundant wealth...was employed for the good of the monastery" (AMHC/C, 1-39: fol. 2v cited in Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:27, my translation).

The construction of the Inmaculada Concepción church began during the peak of the convent's economic wealth. After this point the economic power of the convent began to decline. In 1746 the convent still owned ten *haciendas* throughout the Audiencia of Quito, including Gapal, Zhiña, Chunasana, Chuquipata, Ayancay, and Quingeo (Figure 3); however, this was much reduced compared to wealthier periods (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983:21).

Economic Decline and Church Reform

The 18th century brought about many changes for the Concepción Convent of Cuenca. Economic decline of the convent began early in the century and continued well into the 19th century. Many factors affected this economic decline including an economic crisis within the Spanish colonies, a decline in payments on *censos*, and a reduction in the number of women entering the convent. The changes to convent life, however, were not only economic; by the end of the 18th century the convent was subjected to extensive reforms by the newly appointed Bishop of Cuenca and later by the new Republican government. All these factors greatly affected the Inmaculada Concepción Convent and eventually led the convent into a state of relative poverty.

In the 18th century, an economic crisis struck Cuenca, as well as many other cities throughout the Spanish colonies (Paniagua Pérez 1986:127). This crisis was sparked by two factors: a decline in mineral production from mines such as Potosí, and the competition of European textiles with the textile industry in and around Cuenca. Both of these factors heavily impacted the north central region of the Audiencia of Quito (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990). The crisis brought about many changes to the way land was distributed and the jurisdiction of the government of Cuenca. Income

from outlying areas became irrecoverable for the convent because the city no longer had influence in these areas. This was further complicated by the nuns having to trust their outside business affairs and collection of payments to administrators and legal representatives who were often ineffective (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:31).

Another major problem experienced by the convent in the 18th century was the inability of citizens to pay interest on loans and *censos*. The economic decline had caused many land owners and merchants to become burdened by debt and they could no longer afford to make payments on the many *censos* held against their property. In Cuzco, nuns had similar problems collecting the debts owed to them. Many *haciendas* in the region were not producing enough income to cover payments on the property's debt; families were forced to either give up their property to the convents to avoid lawsuits or neglect their payments while trying to convince the nuns not to take legal action (Burns 1999). The convents of Cuzco were spending increasing amounts of money per year on lawsuits to recover the money owed to them. In Cuenca, the Concepción convent was experiencing similar difficulties. By 1806, of the 165,255 pesos of *censos* imposed in favour of the convent since 1626, 47,785 were either lost or used in litigation (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:32).

Along with a severe decrease in the payments of *censos*, the nuns were experiencing a loss of income due to their inability to recover tribute from *haciendas*. In 1722 the community of religious women confronted Bishop Ladrón de Guevara, stating that the convent had not received tribute payments from Indians in 11 years (Paniagua Pérez 1990:579). By the end of the 18th century, the three year accounts of the convent

constantly returned a negative balance owing to debts. In 1780 the abbess asked the bishop for permission to sell an estate (*finca*) to make payments on these debts. She also stated that it had been more than 12 or 14 years since a woman had entered the convent with a dowry (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:30-31). The Concepción Convent was not only experiencing a decrease in income from investments, they were also facing a decline in the number of dowries that could be invested to increase their income.

Another major change affecting religious institutions throughout Spain and the colonies was the Bourbon reforms that began in the mid 18th century. Burns (1999:159) explains that "moved at least as much by financial expediency as by the power of enlightened thinking, the Bourbon monarchs of Spain began to curtail the power of the clergy on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly after Charles III came to power in 1759." Bourbon reform of the church stemmed from the idea that the church held too much property, was excessively wealthy, and should be stopped from gaining any more economic power. The church was seen as an obstacle to increasing agricultural production and industry (Burns 1999:159). Religious institutions of the colonies became targets of criticism and in 1772 a council of bishops met in Lima to discuss ways to reform the church in Peru. Burns (1990:166) states that the "bishops sought to reinforce discipline in Peruvian convents in various ways: by limiting the number of nuns allowed in each convent in proportion to its income, restricting the number of secular inhabitants, and reinforcing the control of male ecclesiastical authorities over the nuns' spiritual and financial affairs."

These reforms were felt very severely in the Concepción Convent of Cuenca.

Major reform began in 1787 when a diocese was created in the city of Cuenca and Don José Carrión y Marfil took the position of bishop (Paniagua Pérez 1990:580). Until this point the religious institutions of Cuenca had been under the direction of the bishop in Quito, who was far enough away that they had relative freedom from ecclesiastical authority. An example of the liberties taken by the Concepción convent is in the population of the convent at the end of the 18th century; there were 184 women living in the convent with only 27 nuns of the black veil, one nun of the white veil, and one novice. The rest of the convent was made up of 16 secular women, five children, and 134 *criadas* or servants (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:19). According to the rules of the cloister, convents were allowed only one *criada* for every ten nuns.

The newly appointed bishop soon became aware of the transgression from the rules of the order and the disorganization that plagued the convent. One incident in particular, involving a secular woman of the city of Cuenca, caught the attention of the bishop and eventually brought about many changes to the convent. The woman, Doña Ignacia de Echegaray, was a *recogida* living inside the convent. A *recogida* is a woman who voluntarily takes on a religious, enclosed, life without taking formal vows. However, Doña Ignacia entered and left the convent freely at all hours of the day or night and often stayed away for days at a time. The bishop told the abbess and the chaplain of the convent that Doña Ignacia was prohibited to enter the convent as she was a secular and owned her own houses in the city. These orders were not heeded, however, and Doña Ignacia returned to the convent with the priest Ignacio Macías and some other citizens of Cuenca. The nuns, who were dressed in secular clothing, were entertaining the visitors

with dancing and drinking (Paniagua Pérez 1990:580). The incident with Doña Ignacia was relayed to the King in 1791; the document included a request to approve a planned action for reform (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:21). These reforms included placing a grille in the church and the *locutorio* to keep the nuns hidden from the secular population, establishing control over those entering in the *porteria*, and instituting a *torno* as the only form of communication with the outside world (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:21).

The reforms called for in 1791 were repeated 11 years later in 1802, with a letter written by Bishop Francisco Xavier to the newly appointed abbess of the convent, Madre Felipa de Santo Tomas. The letter once again demanded changes within the convent. In this letter Bishop Xavier stated that the Concepción Convent had fallen into a state of total disarray and had transgressed from the rules of the sacred institution. He described the corrupting influence of servants entering and leaving at all hours of the day, disrupting the tranquility and silence necessary for a religious cloister. Finally, the bishop demanded that the nuns only receive visitors approved by the mother superior, in the *locutorio*, with an *escucha* (a chaperone), and that the only other people allowed in the monastery be the servants who lived there. These rules had to be met within eight days (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981). The nuns of the Concepción Convent were beginning to experience the restrictions and changes that would eventually transform the convent into a communal, poverty stricken institution.

Throughout the 19th century, economic decline continued for religious institutions including the Concepción Convent. In 1806 the convent raised the price of the dowry from 1000 to 2000 pesos, asking for the amount to be paid in cash instead of long-

term investments that were becoming increasingly difficult to recover (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:18). Because of the lack of cash circulating in the economy, the convent had no choice but to accept payment in agricultural goods. However, archival documents show that the payments being made to the convent in produce were often spoiled or bad, leaving the convent with a further economic loss (AHMC/C 3-193:fol 1v, cited in Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:32).

Economic decline of the Cuenca region was further aggravated by the Wars of Independence from 1809 to 1822 (Jamieson 2000: 43; Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:33). During these wars, many *haciendas* in rural areas were destroyed. Religious institutions in and around Cuenca lost a large portion of their landholdings and as a result lost a major source of income (Jamieson 2000:44). After Ecuador gained Independence in 1830, the economy of Cuenca was stagnant until 1860 (Jamieson 2000:45). The Concepción nuns, although facing increasing economic hardship, managed to maintain some of their *haciendas* and some of their income. This was not the case for all religious institutions; in 1832 the Augustinian convent was abandoned in the city of Cuenca (Jamieson 2000:44).

Convent reforms continued into the 19th century. In 1885 the Bishop of Cuenca, Don Miguel León, made his annual visit to the Concepción Convent. The document which describes his visit called for major changes not only to the physical layout of the institution, but also to the way of life for the nuns. The bishop called for the nuns to begin living a communal life, as stated in the constitution of the order, and to use only local ceramics and wooden utensils during meals, as required by the vow of poverty. The bishop also stated at the end of the document that within eight days of the visit all of the

secular *criadas* exceeding the rule of one *criada* for every ten nuns must leave the convent (AHMC/C *Libro de Visitas*, cited in Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983:33-37).

State economic reforms further decreased the convent's economic power. Two reforms in particular were put in place to limit the income of religious institutions and power from extensive land holdings. The first was the transfer of *censos* to the National Treasury for a quarter of the *censos*' value; the second was the expropriation of the largest *haciendas* from religious institutions in 1907 (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:33). The convent was, however, able to keep a few *haciendas* in Gañadel, Turi, Gapal, and Machángara (Figure 3). After these reforms the convent had to severely reorganize its economy since the nuns could no longer rely on income from *censo* payments and agricultural production. In the first half of the 20th century, the nuns paid rent to the state for the use of the *haciendas* they had previously owned. After 1945, however, this situation became economically unfeasible (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:33).

Since the mid 20th century the nuns have fallen further into poverty. They became reliant on income from the sale of sweets, bread, and rose water to the community and eventually sold their remaining rural properties in order to build stores and apartments on the convent block which could be rented out to the public. In 1975 the Conceptionists renewed their constitution following the Second Vatican Council and adopted a completely communal life, with all women within the convent being equal to nuns of the black veil (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990:33-34).

The Concepción Convent Today

Like many other convents in Latin America, the Concepción Convent of Cuenca has become less important to the city than it once was. However, it remains an active institution that has evolved through 400 years of continuous use. The nuns have maintained their space in the city and have survived the reforms that brought them into poverty. They now live a communal life and strictly follow the rules of the order. The community is much smaller than it once was, with only 18 professed nuns, three novices, and one postulant in 1999 (Kennedy Troya 1999:27). The nuns have become marginalised by the government and the city and they are much more defensive to outsiders and possible threats to their way of life.

Conclusion

Throughout the colonial period the Concepción Convent of Cuenca developed into a wealthy institution in the city. By becoming landowners and creditors, the nuns were able to increase their economic position in society. The Concepción Convent was a relatively small institution in the Spanish colonies, yet it still had a major influence on the economic development of Cuenca. Like other convents in the colonies, this economic position allowed some of the nuns freedoms and opportunities that were not available to other women in colonial society. By the end of the 18th century, however, the Concepción nuns began to experience not only economic decline, but also church reform. These two factors together greatly affected the convent and eventually led the institution into poverty. Because of the loss in economic power, the nuns were no longer able to resist

the dominant ecclesiastical authority. As a result the convent lost much of its independence and power.

The forces of church and economic reform that began in the late 18th century had profound effects on female religious institutions throughout Latin America. The Concepción Convent of Cuenca, although poor and increasingly segregated from the community, has maintained its space in the city. The economic changes that have occurred over the last 400 years have affected not only the architecture of the convent, but also the material culture of the women within. Information about periods of prosperity and decline provides a context in which we can place the architectural and archaeological work done in the convent over the last 20 years.

Chapter 4

Architectural Development and Archaeological Investigation

The Concepción Convent, when founded in 1599, was a relatively open city block with some houses on the property. Over the last 400 years, the convent has developed architecturally with the continuous construction and restoration that was necessary to house an increasing population in the colonial period and to maintain the buildings as the convent aged. As discussed earlier, the convent, since the founding of the Republic of Ecuador in 1830, has experienced increasing economic decline and instability. Along with economic problems, the convent continues to experience shifts in cultural perceptions of health and sanitation. These changes have affected the architecture of the convent in both positive and negative ways. The architecture and use of space within the convent is constantly changing according to the ideas and requirements of the nuns, ecclesiastical authorities, and the secular city. In this chapter I discuss the architectural elements of the convent as they developed, how the convent looks today, and the restoration projects that have taken place in order to maintain some of the architecture and art within the convent. Archival research necessary for understanding the developments in architecture was completed by the architects Edmundo Iturralde A. and

Gustavo Lloret O. (1981, 1983) for their restoration project in the convent museum. In order to provide a comprehensive discussion of the convent's architecture, I have relied on the archival records examined in their report as well as archival research I conducted in the summer of 2002. In this chapter I also discuss the archaeological excavations completed within the convent and the collections I was able to analyse.

Architectural Developments: From Foundation to Economic Decline

The Concepción Convent began in 1599 with a full city block donated to the foundation by Doña Leonor Ordóñez. The property is described in the documents as "the best houses in all the city and the most comfortable...well enclosed all around with enough buildings for their habitation and with a church, upper and lower choir and a water fountain within..." (AMHC/C fols. 3-3v-. cited in Chacón Zhapan 1990:473, my translation). Very few published descriptions of the original buildings exist; however, documents state that the donated property was worth 4,250 pesos and was made up of four *solares* or one city block. It also, as noted in the documents, was surrounded by property owners and elite members of society, such as Juan de Ortega, the *escribano* (secretary) for the Crown (Chacón Zhapan 1990:472). Like most other convents in the Spanish colonies, however, the original buildings soon became insufficient for the growing population of the convent and construction of other buildings, including individual cells for the nuns, began soon after the foundation.

Documentary evidence is a key source for understanding the architectural development of the convent. In the early 17th century, the convent expanded its buildings in various ways, such as the construction of individual cells or apartments (Figure 4). As

with many convents of the colonial era, the Concepción Convent of Cuenca did not require complete adherence to the rule of *vida común* (communal life), as the nuns were *calzada* nuns; meaning "they did not live in a communal manner, and each nun was allowed a personal income from her own private sources to spend as she desired" (Lavrin 1966:382). The nuns of the black veil entering the convent were allowed to purchase or build individual private cells in which they could live with their servants to help them with domestic labour (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983:14). These cells often included kitchens and private patios (Burns 1999). The documentary evidence for the building of individual cells is limited; however, there are references to the selling of private cells and payments for their improvement. For example, in the will of Don Diego Patino de Narvaez, the San Blas parish priest, he gave a private cell within the convent to the nun Doña Isabel de la Visitación, which he purchased from Doña Maria de San Benito. The cell was described as having two floors with a corridor. Don Diego states in the will that he restored the cell at his own expense and paid large amounts of money for carpenters and building materials (ANH/C 1680 78.327 68r., my translation).

Other architectural developments occurred during the 17th century. A dormitory was improved in 1625 along with a *pila* (baptismal font) on behalf of a donation made by Luis Méndez Vázquez (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:62). In 1633, the documents mention the existence of a "*locutorio viejo*", presumably part of the original houses donated by Doña Leonor, a "*locutorio nuevo*," an extension of the original houses, and a *sacristía* (sacristy) (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983:39). The archival records of costs for the Concepción Convent reveal two major periods of construction which began in the late 17th century. The first is the building of a new church for the convent which began in

1682 and took approximately four years to complete. The second is the construction of another church, from 1712 to 1720, which still stands today.

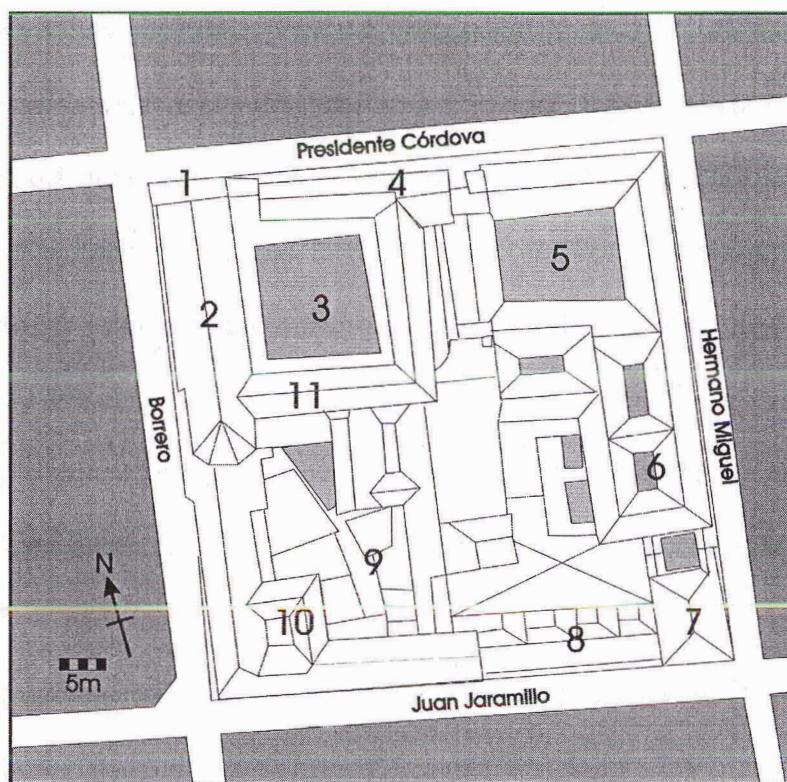


Figure 4. Map of the Concepción Convent (after Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981), 1. *espadaña* or belfry, 2. convent church, 3. previous primary cloister, 4. 1960s building housing the *porteria*, *torno*, and administrative offices, 5. primary cloister or *Casa Nueva*, 6. infirmary/convent museum, 7. *Panteón*, 8. rented apartments, 9. previous location of individual cells, 10. novices quarters, 11. Refectory and *sala de profundis*

The building of a new church for the convent was an enormous economic undertaking. The archival documents list various expenses related to the construction and the total cost for each month from 1682 to 1686. One document from 1686 describes the disruption experienced by the nuns during construction: "...every day giving food to Indians, labourers, bricklayers, carpenters, stone masons and their supervisors and the Spanish *mayordomos* who were assisting; thus there were occasions when we had to feed 200 people, but on a regular basis we fed 50 or 60" (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:62,

my translation). The building of the church cost more than 45,000 pesos over the four years of construction (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:63). The location of the new church on the property is unclear; however, researchers believe that this church was located on the north-western corner of the property, bordering what is now Presidente Córdova street, oriented in an east-west direction (Figure 4) (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:65). It is also believed that this church was built on the site of the original chapel that was a part of the property donated by Doña Leonor (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:65).

During the three year time period following construction, from 1686-1689, the Concepción Convent continued to improve the church despite the major expense of its construction. The archives discuss expenses related to the building and maintenance of the *tabernáculo* (Tabernacle), the *sagrario* (sanctuary), the cloister with both an upper and lower floor, and the *porteria* (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983:40). At the end of the 17th century and into the beginning of the 18th century, the nuns were continuing to improve their property through ornamentation of various parts of the church and cloister and construction.

The next major phase of construction began in 1712 with the building of another, larger church to replace the one completed only 25 years earlier. Construction took eight years to complete and the church has remained a symbolic presence in the city. This church was built on the same corner of the property as the previous church; however, the orientation is north-south as opposed to the previous east-west direction. In the convent archives a diary exists which outlines expenses from 1712 to 1720 and describes in detail the costs related to the building of the church, including the wages of various workers and

the cost of building materials. For example, the stonemasons, Santiago and Manuel, were paid three pesos per day for a total of 128 pesos, five *reales*, and 161 pesos, two *reales*, respectively. The carpenter, Juan Machuca M., was paid a total of 1,780 pesos, four *reales*, for all of his work and the architect, Manuel Vivar, was paid 148 pesos, 5 *reales* (AHMC/C 1712 y 1720:116, cited in Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:67). The cost of materials used in the construction was also documented, showing the types of materials being used and the amount. For example, the document describes a payment of 970 pesos for wood used for various parts of the church and a purchase of 1000 pounds of gold which cost 12,266 pesos to ornament the altar (AHMC/C 1712 y 1720:117, cited in Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:69).

The diary outlining the expenses from 1712 to 1720 demonstrates the major economic undertaking of this episode of construction. At the end of the diary, however, it also provides details on the women who professed during those eight years and the dowries that were used to help fund construction. Josepha de San Marcos brought 2000 pesos with her at her profession of which half was used to help in the costs of construction. The diary also lists donations made to the convent by members of the community, such as Don Francisco Reinoso who donated 190 pesos. This money was used to purchase fabric for ornamentation of the church (AHMC/C 1712 y 1720:119, cited in Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:73). The largest donation, however, was made by the Mother Superior herself, Madre Sebastiana de San Juan. The documents state that she was a very wealthy woman and a large portion of her wealth was donated for the benefit of the monastery and the building of the church (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990). The total amount of Madre Sebastiana's wealth used in the construction of the

church is documented at 10,140 pesos (AHMC/C 1712 y 1720:116, cited in Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:73).

Although the church construction used up vast amounts of the convent's economic resources, construction and further building within the convent continued through the 18th century. During this period the *sacristía* was completed as well as the corridors of the primary cloisters, the ornamentation of the church, and the *tabernáculo*. This was a period of general economic prosperity for the convent as the nuns had the resources to improve the convent and its property. This phase of building, especially during the church construction, displayed the economic status of the convent in Cuenca society. Not only were the nuns employing a large number of people from the city, but they were also building a large structure in the centre of the city which was a symbol of the wealth of the convent and the power of the religious women within.

Architecture and Economic Decline

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 19th century brought about a major economic decline for the Concepción Convent of Cuenca. At the same time, the newly appointed Bishop of Cuenca was making regular visits and documenting repairs and construction needed in the convent. These recommendations included repairs to the church, ornamentation of the church, and the enforcement of communal living for the nuns (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981). Because of the economic crisis that the nuns were experiencing, the architectural developments occurred sporadically and recommendations by the bishop often went unheeded. Although the nuns were dealing with economic hardship, the convent did manage to undertake some major architectural developments in

the 19th century including the building of the *Panteón* (mausoleum), the infirmary, renovation of the church, and adaptation to a *vida común*.

With the implementation of a bishopric in the city of Cuenca in 1787 (Paniagua Pérez 1990:580), visits to the convent by the bishop for inspection became more regular. Previously, the closest bishop to the convent was in Quito and the visits to the convent were sporadic. Beginning in the late 18th and early 19th century, documents describing these visits cite many recommendations as to how the church needed to be repaired and the type of construction required for the nuns to live more comfortably and safely (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981). These recommendations were often repeated several times from year to year as the convent could either not afford to make the repairs or the recommendations were simply being ignored. One such case is the construction of the *Panteón* or mausoleum (Figure 4). In 1846 the convent gained permission from the government to build the *Panteón* in the south-east corner of the convent bordering Juan Jaramillo and Hermano Miguel streets (which still exist today) (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:85). This location was chosen because it was the furthest corner from the living areas of the nuns and the authorities wanted to protect the health of the women in the convent from the insanitariness of the corpses (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:85). Again in 1862, 1864, and 1865 the delegates of the bishop visiting the convent stated the necessity of beginning preparations for building the *Panteón*. In the document from 1865 describing the visit, the delegates stated that the *Panteón* was necessary to reestablish purity of air in the *coro bajo* (lower choir) of the church. The lower choir was believed to be the cause of infection for the many nuns who were becoming ill. It was thought that the corpses entombed there were improperly buried and as a result were spreading

illnesses (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:87). Finally in 1875 the documents suggest that the *Panteón* was complete and deceased nuns were being entombed in the new mausoleum.

Similar to the recommendations to build the *Panteón*, the bishop in 1868 began to comment on the need for an infirmary to house the nuns who were ill. One of the reasons given for the necessity of this building was that the ill nuns remained in their rooms and visiting nurses and attending nuns were required to run all over the convent taking care of the sick. In building the infirmary, the nurses would be able to serve the sick more effectively and those who were ill could be isolated to reduce the spread of illness (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:91). Like the *Panteón*, recommendations to build an infirmary appeared in the documents until at least 1877 and by 1884 the first floor was complete (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:92; James 1994:47). The building was constructed in the south-east corner of the convent, adjacent to the *Panteón* garden, and contained two enclosed gardens and its own kitchen (Figure 4). The second floor of the infirmary was not completed until 1927 (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:94).

Throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century, many architectural projects were undertaken to improve the convent along with the *Panteón* and infirmary. A house for novices was constructed in the 1870s which provided suitable living quarters and space for instruction (James 1994:48). The convent church also underwent restoration and improvements. For example the *espadaña*, or belfry, was expanded and improved and in 1870 bronze bells were made and installed (James 1994:50); the *coro bajo* was relocated within the church; and later, in 1919, the exterior walls of the church

were raised approximately three feet and a new ceiling and roof were constructed for the church (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1983; James 1994).

In order to implement the rule of *vida común*, changes had to be made to the convent buildings to provide appropriate spaces for the nuns to live and work. The bishop had called for, among other things, a communal kitchen and a shared dormitory. Following the order of the bishop, the *Casa Nueva* was constructed in the north-eastern corner of the convent by 1874 (Figure 4) (James 1994:48). This new cloister encompassed the second cloister and soon became the building in which all nuns were required to have their cells (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:90). A common kitchen was also constructed in the convent and the nuns were required to take their meals through the kitchen, rather than cooking for themselves in their private cells.

20th Century Decline and Restoration

Throughout the 20th century, the Concepción Convent fell further into poverty and the nuns were forced to make major changes to the architecture of the convent in order to maintain their income. Not only were the nuns forced to abandon some parts of the convent because of disrepair, they also decided to convert parts of the cloisters into apartments and shops which could be rented out to the public and build new parts of the convent to maintain the cloister walls. However, not all changes made to the convent in the last half of the 20th century were the result of financial necessity. Interest in the history of the convent and the value of its art and architecture has led to some restoration projects which have improved parts of the convent for the nuns and for the public. Two major restoration projects occurred which will be discussed here, one of which restored

the sacristy and refectory inside the convent and the other which restored the infirmary and *Panteón* and converted them into a museum.

Because of the economic decline the nuns experienced during the 19th and 20th centuries, parts of the convent fell into disrepair and neglect. In 1962 the principal cloister was dismantled as it was uninhabitable. The top floor of this cloister was completely destroyed and only the south and east wings of the lower floor were kept intact (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:95). In 1965 a new three storey building was constructed on Presidente Córdova street on the north side of the convent (Figure 5) (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:96). This building became the main entrance to the convent as it houses the *portería*, *locutorio*, and *torno* (Figure 4). The main offices of the convent are also in this building, along with the convent archives. The nuns, in order to increase their income, decided to convert parts of the convent into apartments and shops that could be rented out to the public. In 1967 the wing of the *Casa Nueva* bordering Hermano Miguel street was converted into shops for the public to rent (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:96). For this conversion to occur, the windows and doors facing the interior of the convent were closed off and new doors which opened out to the street were put in place. The upper floor of these small shops were also converted into apartments or storage spaces for the shopkeepers. Similarly, in 1972 the wall which bordered Juan Jaramillo street and the garden which was behind it were destroyed and four apartments were constructed for renting out (Figure 4) (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:96). The income from the apartments and shops have helped to maintain the nuns inside the convent and have also provided them with space to sell their own products, such as sweets and rose water.

In the late 1970s, there was some interest in restoring parts of the convent that were beginning to fall into disrepair. The first restoration project undertaken was in the *Panteón*. A new cemetery was built in the convent in 1973 and by 1976 the old *Panteón* was abandoned (Iturralde A. and Lloret O. 1981:97; James 1994:59). This area of the convent, including the adjacent infirmary, was later converted into a museum which is still in operation today. The restoration project and the architectural transformation of the infirmary into a museum was undertaken by the architects Edmundo Iturralde A. and Gustavo Lloret O. The project began in the early 1980s and was completed in 1986 with the opening of the museum (James 1994:60).



Figure 5. North Wall of Convent: the *espadaña* of the church (right) was completed in the late 19th century. The three storey building (center) built in 1965 now contains the offices of the convent, the *torno*, *porteria*, and *locutorio*.

Other major restoration projects that took place in the convent were in the sacristy, Refectory, and the *sala de profundis*. The restoration in the sacristy began in 1980 with the aid of various governmental agencies. The purpose of the project was to repair the ceiling of the sacristy and restore the murals on the walls of the room. According to Iturralde and Lloret (1981:98), however, this work was done unsatisfactorily and was never completed. Similar to the sacristy, the work done in the Refectory and *sala de profundis* also focused on restoring the ceiling, which is a hanging cane constructed ceiling, with a mural painted across it. The project also sought to restore the 18th century mural paintings on the walls of the Refectory. This project was undertaken in 1993 by the Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultura (INPC) of Cuenca (James 1994).

The changes that have taken place in the last 100 years of the convent's existence have been both out of necessity and public interest. Restoration projects have allowed parts of the convent to maintain their original structure and presence and at the same time have created easier access for the secular city to the convent and its history. The nuns, on the other hand, have lost some of their property to the secular city and have been forced to find ways to supplement their income in order to maintain the property they still have. The location of the convent in the centre of the city is problematic for the nuns, along with their increasing poverty, as it is difficult for them to maintain their autonomy and their enclosure. With the increasing interest in the history and restoration of the convent, however, the nuns have been able to maintain spaces in the convent and also provide space for research into the lives of the nuns and the history of the institution.

Archaeological Research in the Concepción Convent

The archaeological excavations that I conducted during the summer field season of 2002 were part of a larger project, the Cuenca Historical Archaeology Project, run by Dr. Ross Jamieson. Excavations were concentrated within the gardens of the convent museum (Figure 4), as this is the only space open to the public. Material culture from these excavations are the focus of my research project; however, I also analysed collections from an earlier excavation in 1993 during the restoration of the Refectory and the collection currently on display in the convent museum. I will provide a brief description of the excavations conducted in 1993 and the material culture from these excavations. I will then discuss the excavations conducted in 2002.

Excavations in the Refectory

The archaeological work conducted in 1993 was part of the restoration project that was undertaken in the Refectory and *sala de profundis* inside the convent (Figure 4). Excavations took place in the Refectory once the modern wooden floors of the room were removed. The excavations, however, were done very quickly, with very little control, and without records. Antonio Carrillo B., the head archaeologist, was able to excavate 23, 1x1 m units with one or two levels in each unit (Carrillo B., personal communication 2002). As there were no excavation notes made available to me, it is difficult to determine the depth of the levels and approximate dates of deposition. The only published description of this work states that the excavation went through 0.2 m of compact, modern fill with mixed artifacts. This layer was followed by a layer approximately 0.4 m deep which contained artifacts from the colonial period as well as some Inka material (Idrovo

Urigüen 2000:151). Although information about the excavations is lacking, there are some interesting pieces which I encountered during my analysis which will be discussed later. These artifacts, although their provenience is unclear, provide some insight into the lives of nuns within the convent and the type of material culture that they used.

Museum/Infirmary Excavations

The excavations that I conducted in 2002 were centered in the museum, or infirmary, section of the Concepción Convent. Excavations within the working convent were not possible as the convent is cloistered and generally closed to the secular public. There are two main gardens within the infirmary where I was able to place excavation units. I was also able to excavate in the *Panteón* garden. Because of limited time and labour, the excavations were restricted to four 1x1 m units. Units in the gardens were placed in areas with sufficient space and in order to minimise disturbance to existing garden features. Each unit was excavated with the use of shovels and picks, where necessary, and with trowels, when conditions were favourable. The matrix was systematically screened through 6 mm (1/4 inch) screening and all artifacts were placed in bags and labelled. Because of size, weight, and abundance, ceramic tile and brick fragments commonly found in Spanish colonial archaeological contexts were counted and then discarded, following the methods used in the Cuenca Historic Archaeology Project (Jamieson 2000). Each unit was excavated in arbitrary 20 cm lots unless a change in the deposit was visible at which point the lot was changed accordingly. The following is a discussion of the excavated units, the contexts within the units, and how they relate to one another temporally.

Unit 1

The first unit excavated was a 1x1 m unit in the north garden of the museum (Figure 6). This unit was the only excavation done in the north garden and produced the only colonial context found in the project. Six lots or levels were excavated in the unit which will be discussed as three separate phases of deposition. Lots 1 and 2, from 0 to 30 cm below surface (Figure 7), consisted of a dark clay/loam with inclusions of charcoal and river cobbles. This deposit contained construction material as well as modern garden fill. A modern drainage pipe and trench were also removed as part of these lots, and were probably placed in the garden during the restoration project in the early 1980s. The following two lots (3 and 4), from approximately 30 to 45 cm below surface (Figure 7), were garden fill probably from the garden which existed before the infirmary was built in the late 19th century. These two lots consisted of compact dark clay/loam with construction material and river cobbles. The date for the deposition of these lots is post 1820 as the context contained refined white earthenwares (Miller 2000:13) and therefore date to the Republican period in Ecuador (post 1830).

Lots 5 and 6, from approximately 45 to 75 cm below surface (Figure 7), provide a very interesting context as they date to the colonial period. These two lots were separated arbitrarily into 20cm levels during excavation but consist of the same dark compact organic clay/loam. All datable artifacts recovered from this context date to the colonial period, with the exception of a short length of modern, plastic coated, electrical wire which is probably intrusive. The wire has been discounted as it is the only modern artifact excavated from this context and from the preceding context. It is possible that the wire

was deposited in this context due to rodent disturbance or due to an error during excavation.

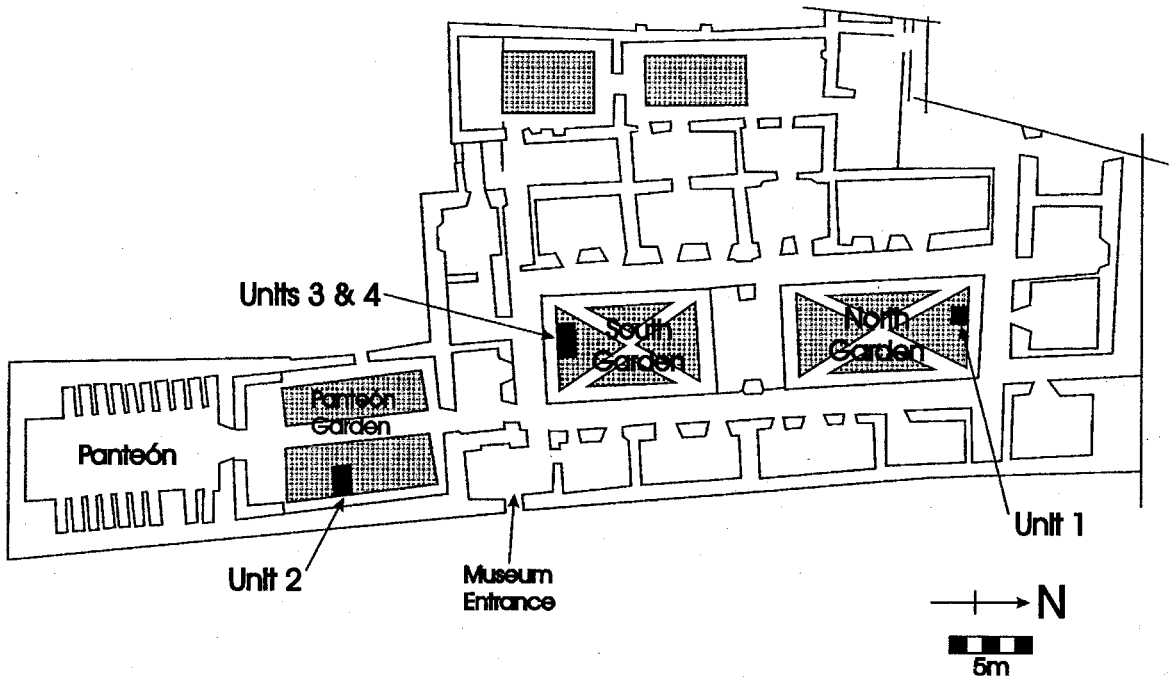


Figure 6. Excavation Units in the Museum

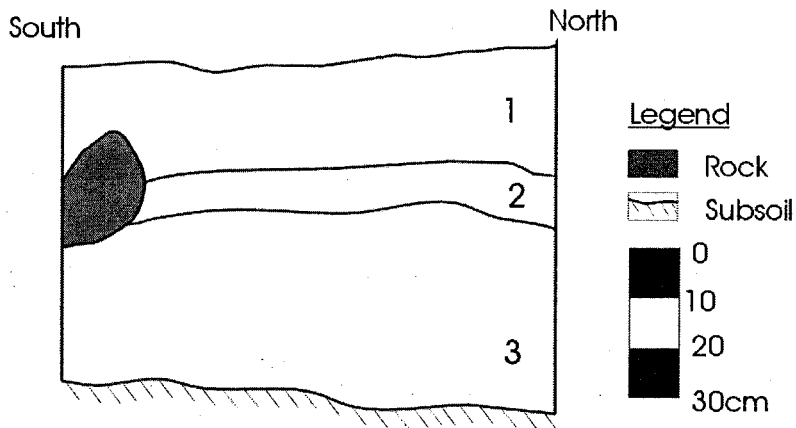


Figure 7. Unit 1 West Wall Profile, 1. modern garden layer, 2. Republican garden layer, 3. colonial context

The majority of the artifacts recovered from this context are ceramic earthenware, including some imported ceramics from Panama and Spain. The context also includes a large number of roof tiles which most likely were discarded in the back garden of the convent during an episode of construction. Considering the location of the garden in relation to the rest of the convent, and the fact that the infirmary was the first building constructed in that corner of the convent, the area was most likely used as a midden and garden during the colonial period. A detailed discussion of the artifacts recovered from this context will be given in the following chapter. Underneath lot 6 was a dark grey river clay devoid of cultural material. A small test pit (approximately 15cm in depth) was dug into the sterile sub-soil to ensure no cultural material remained.

Unit 2

The next unit I excavated was a 1x1.5m unit in the *Panteón* garden of the convent museum (Figure 6). This unit consisted of four lots, all of which contained modern 20th century artifacts. The base of lot 4 was at a depth of approximately 35cm below surface and was followed by sandy-clay yellow sterile subsoil.

Units 3 and 4

In an attempt to locate more colonial contexts, I began excavating the south garden of the museum located near the front entrance way (Figure 6). The first unit in this garden, Unit 3, was a 1x1 m unit with 8 lots. Because of the interesting features found in Unit 3, I decided to extend the unit to the east by creating Unit 4, a new 1x1 m. Unit 4 consisted of 16 lots, all of which correspond to the lots and features found in Unit 3. The lots from both units can be grouped into four different phases of deposition which I will discuss in turn. Lot 1 of both units consisted of a modern garden fill similar to lots 1 and

2 in Unit 1 and was probably deposited during the restoration of the museum in the 1980s. This lot went to a depth of about 10 cm in Unit 3 and 15 cm in Unit 4 (Figures 8 and 9).

The following layer was a more compact garden layer of black clay/loam which was excavated as lots 2 and 3 from Unit 3 and lots 2, 3, 4, and 9 from Unit 4. This layer went to a depth of about 40cm below surface. Along the west wall of Unit 3, the remains of a stone wall were uncovered (Figure 8). This wall, constructed of river cobbles, began at 19cm below the surface and went to a depth of approximately 49 cm below surface. Throughout the layer adjacent to the wall (Unit 3) a large number of smaller cobblestones were excavated which made up part of an *empedrada*, a cobbled stone pavement, very likely dating to the construction of the infirmary. When the unit was expanded, more extensive remains of the *empedrada* were found in Unit 4 (Figure 9). Similarly, another stone wall was excavated from Unit 4 which ran parallel to the wall found in Unit 3. The stone wall in Unit 4 began at 19 cm below the surface, as in Unit 3, and went to a depth of approximately 35 cm below surface. The *empedrada* in Unit 4 was more intact and visible than the remains found in Unit 3 because it extended underneath the rock wall and was better preserved (Figures 9 and 10). Garden features such as stone walls and *empedradas* are commonly found in the gardens of Cuenca and the features found in Units 3 and 4 were probably placed in the garden of the infirmary for aesthetic purposes. The artifacts from this layer date to the late 19th century and early 20th century corresponding to the building of the infirmary.

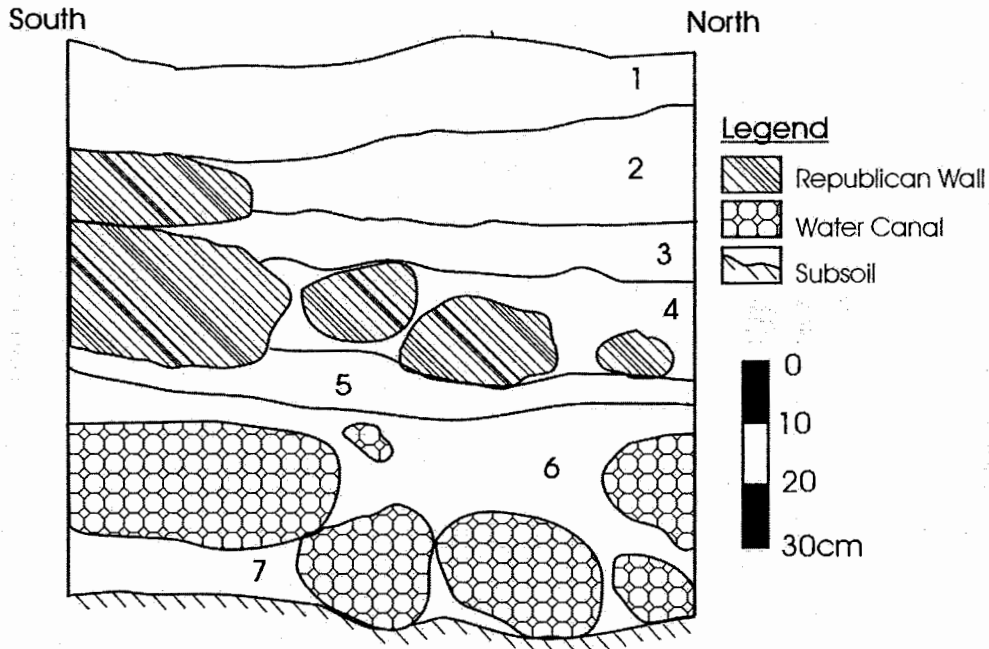


Figure 8. Unit 3 West Wall Profile, 1-2. modern garden fill, 3. *empedrada* layer, 4-6. Republican garden layer, 7. canal debris

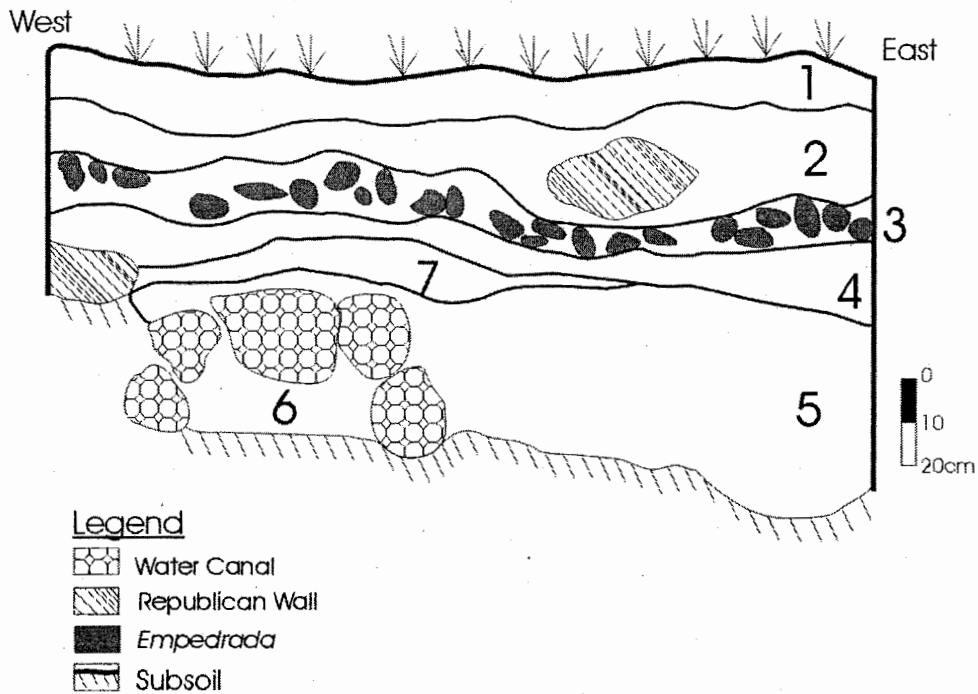


Figure 9. Units 3 and 4 North Wall Profile, 1-2. modern garden fill, 3. *empedrada* layer, 4-5. Republican garden layer, 6. canal debris, 7. lens of yellow clay, part of Republican garden layer

The material directly below the *empedrada* consisted of dark clay/loam with lenses of lighter yellow clay and went to a depth of about 55-60 cm below surface (Figure 8). This layer includes lots 4 and 5 from Unit 3 and lots 5 through 8, 10, and 11 from Unit 4. These lots all had the same mixed soil and were probably deposited at the same time. The artifacts from this layer post date 1830 and suggest that they are part of a midden/garden deposit similar to the deposit found in Unit 1, lots 3 and 4.

Lots 6 and 7 of Unit 3 contained a water canal running in a north south direction through the unit (Figures 11 and 12). The layer surrounding the canal consisted of very dark organic soil with clay inclusions beginning at the top of the canal, about 55 cm below surface, and went to a depth of 85 cm below surface in the south-east corner of the unit. The same layer extended into Unit 4 and this layer was excavated as lots 12 through 16 and went to a depth of 109 cm in the south-east corner (Figure 9). Sterile subsoil was found underneath this layer in both units and the water canal also rested on subsoil. Water canal construction occurred during the Republican period (post 1830) as the artifacts from within the canal (lot 8) and around the canal include refined white earthenware. The canal was constructed with cobbles along the floor, between 25 cm and 10 cm diameter, placed tightly together with similar sized stones lining the canal walls. Along the top of the canal large stones, ranging from approximately 75 x 35 to 25 x 15cm, formed the cap with smaller stones filling the gaps between the large cobbles (Figures 11 and 12). The inside of the canal was approximately 30cm wide (east - west) and 20 cm deep going to a depth of 93cm below surface. River silt and minimal artifacts were recovered from the inside of the canal (lot 8) and the canal was no longer functional, although it did extend intact in both north and south directions beyond the limits of our excavations.

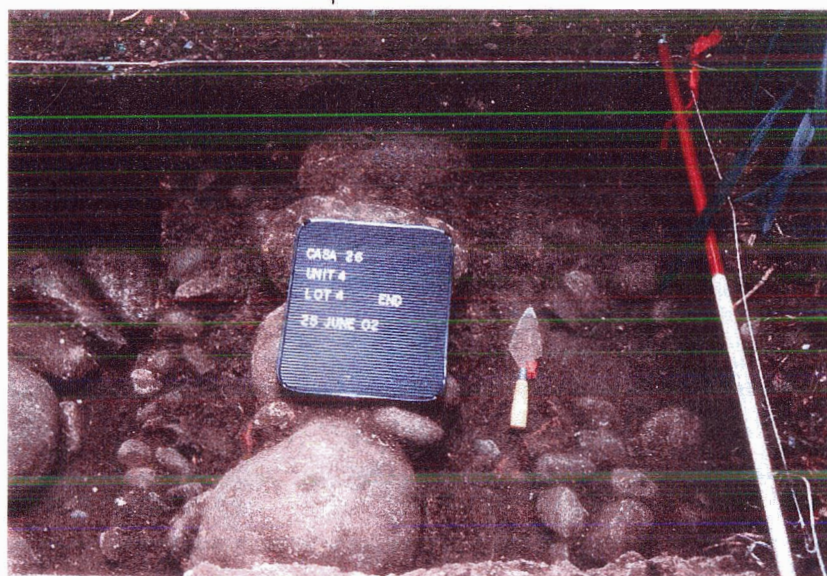


Figure 10. Unit 4, Lot 4. Garden Wall and *Empedrada*

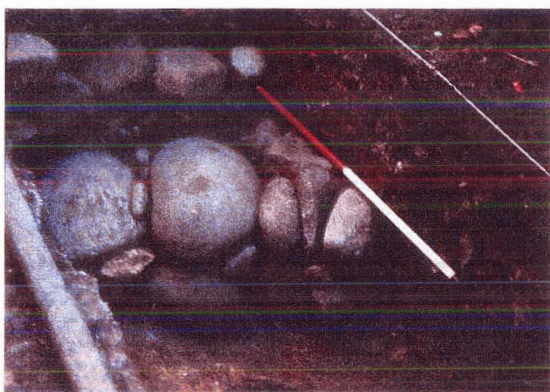


Figure 11. Unit 3, Water Canal and West Garden Wall

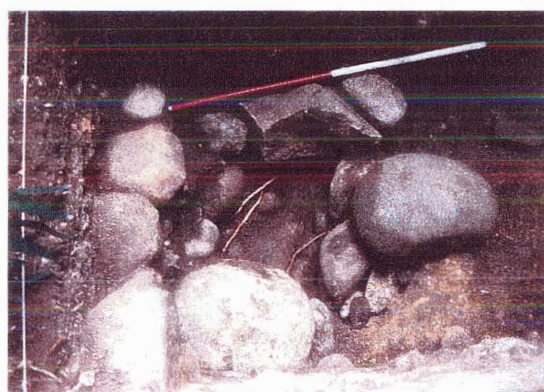


Figure 12. Unit 3, Water Canal

The excavations conducted in the summer of 2002 produced a variety of archaeological contexts dating to the Republican period (post 1830) and one important context dating to the colonial period (1599 to approximately 1800). Although previous

excavations conducted in the Refectory of the Concepción Convent are problematic as they provide little information about archaeological contexts, the excavations did produce some interesting artifacts which can be used to discuss the material culture of the convent. A discussion of the material culture recovered during my excavations in the museum, along with the artifacts from the previous Refectory excavations and a collection from the convent museum, will be provided in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Although some work has been done on the architecture of the Concepción Convent in Cuenca, archaeological work has been very limited. This is the case in most female institutions in colonial Latin America. Colonial convents provide a unique space for archaeologists working in urban centers such as Cuenca. Because of the nature of archaeological work in occupied buildings, finding intact colonial contexts is difficult to accomplish. The Concepción Convent, however, provides a space within the city which has not experienced the same degree of development and disturbance as other areas of the city centre. Previous work done on the convent also provides a good outline of architectural developments, thus giving information about the episodes of construction and deposition often reflected in the archaeological record. Understanding the architecture of the convent provides a context in which to place the artifacts found during excavation and also serves as an extension of the material culture of the women within the convent. The architecture of the convent functioned as a symbol to the secular city not only of the power of religious institutions in general, but also the economic power of this

specific convent. Archaeological studies of female institutions in Latin America can provide insight into the roles of women not only in the church, but also in society.

Chapter 5

Material Culture Analysis

The material culture that I analysed as part of my research during the summer of 2002 includes collections from the museum of the Concepción Convent, the material excavated in 1993 by Antonio Carrillo B., and the artifacts that I excavated from the convent museum. Although none of these collections in itself provides a complete picture of the material culture of the nuns throughout the past 400 years, the collections together provide information about the nuns from various periods in the convent's history. This discussion will focus mainly on ceramic artifacts from the museum collection and from excavations, as ceramics, both local and imported, make up the largest number of artifacts in both excavations and are a large part of the museum display.

The museum collection is interesting as it consists of a variety of art and ceramic pieces donated to the museum by the nuns living in the convent. Unfortunately, however, there is very little information available on when the pieces were donated, by whom, and whether they were part of a nuns' dowry or personal possessions. This collection does provide an interesting look into the types of ceramics that were either highly valued in the convent or were kept for decoration. The artifacts excavated by Antonio Carrillo B. in 1993 also provide information about the material culture used by the nuns. Although the contexts and provenience of these artifacts are difficult to discern, the collection provides

unique pieces dating to various periods throughout the past 400 years. Similarly, the excavations I conducted in the summer of 2002 produced a wide variety of artifacts dating to both the colonial and Republican periods. This chapter provides a detailed description of the types of artifacts found in each collection and a discussion of how these artifacts compare to collections from Cuenca and other areas of the Spanish empire.

The Concepción Convent Museum Collection

The collection in the museum of the Concepción Convent in Cuenca includes a variety of objects ranging from religious statues and paintings to local and imported ceramic vessels. These pieces date from the 17th to the 20th century. Each piece was either donated to the museum by the convent or donated by an individual nun. As stated earlier, the focus of my research was on both the local and imported ceramic vessels in the museum collection. In order to conduct my analysis of these vessels I obtained permission from the museum director to photograph the ceramics and to study the museum catalogue to obtain information about the pieces. Unfortunately, there were obstacles to my research, as all of the imported ceramics were displayed in cabinets sealed with glass and very little information was included in the museum catalogue. I was able to photograph most of the pieces and obtain some information about the manufacturers.

The majority (90 %) of the local ceramics on display in the museum are majolica cream glazed coarse earthenware with green and sometimes brown glazed decoration (Table 1). The use of green, brown, and cream glazing is very common in local ceramic production and is still used today in the production of ceramics in and around Cuenca.

Archaeological material recovered from sites in Cuenca always includes a large number of these local majolica wares (Jamieson 2000). Vessel types in the museum collection ranged from small vessels, such as *plato hondos*, to large bowls and storage containers. Some of the ceramics on display (32 %) were fire blackened from use in the convent kitchens⁶. It is difficult to date these ceramics as it is unclear when majolica production began in Cuenca. It is probable, however, that this ceramic tradition began sometime around the mid 18th century (Jamieson 2000:191).

Table 1. Ceramic Tableware and Cookware from the Museum Collection

Ware Type	N	%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Plain</i>	1	0.9%
<i>Lead Glazed</i>	1	0.9%
<i>Majolica</i>	20	17.9%
Imported Refined White Earthenware		
<i>Creamware</i>	1	0.9%
<i>Transfer printed</i>	8	7.1%
<i>Hand Painted/Gilded</i>	51	45.5%
<i>Banded/Stamped</i>	13	11.0%
<i>Plain</i>	2	1.8%
<i>Decal Printed</i>	3	2.7%
<i>Molded</i>	1	0.9%
Imported Porcelain		
<i>Hand Painted/Gilded</i>	11	9.8%
Total	112	100.0%

Imported ceramics in the museum collection are an eclectic mix of porcelain and refined white earthenware (Table 1). The pieces on display, as stated earlier, were all behind glass and it was impossible for me to remove them from the cabinet to identify maker's marks. However, with the use of the museum catalogue, I was able to obtain

⁶Although local majolicas may have had a considerable economic value in the colonial period, by the 20th century this ware type was inexpensive; therefore, the use of local majolicas as cooking vessels is probably a modern phenomenon.

some information about maker's marks found on the backs of the vessels. From this, I have been able to gather some information about the date of some of the vessels and where they were manufactured.

Two types of vessels on display in the museum were from the French ceramic manufacturing company Creil et Montereau. The first is a set of small refined white earthenware bowls with a solid blue glaze on the exterior. The second is a refined white earthenware transfer print plate with a depiction of Jesus. The set of 12 small bowls are stamped with a maker's mark from Creil et Montereau dating between 1876-1884 (Creil et Montereau 2001). The decorative plate depicting Jesus is stamped with a maker's mark from Lebeuf Millet et Cie dating between 1841 and 1876 (Figure 13) (Creil et Montereau 2001). The frieze of the plate is a blue transfer print with religious imagery depicted. The scene on the plate is a black transfer print design of Jesus surrounded by men (Figure 14). The caption on the plate reads "Voilà L'Homme!" and is numbered as No. 12. Beginning early in the 19th century, Creil et Montereau artists began producing ceramics which depicted various types of scenes, such as military, Parisian cityscapes, and royal portraits (Creil et Montereau 2001). These plates were produced in a variety of series and the plate depicting Jesus was probably part of a religious series. Ceramic pieces manufactured by Creil et Montereau have been documented in a number of Spanish American cities. Jamieson (2000:197) describes a set of soft-paste porcelain plates found in the Municipal Museum in Cuenca and Fournier García (1990:112) lists a number of ceramic vessels from the manufacturer found in an archaeological investigation of the ex-convent of San Jeronimo in Mexico City.

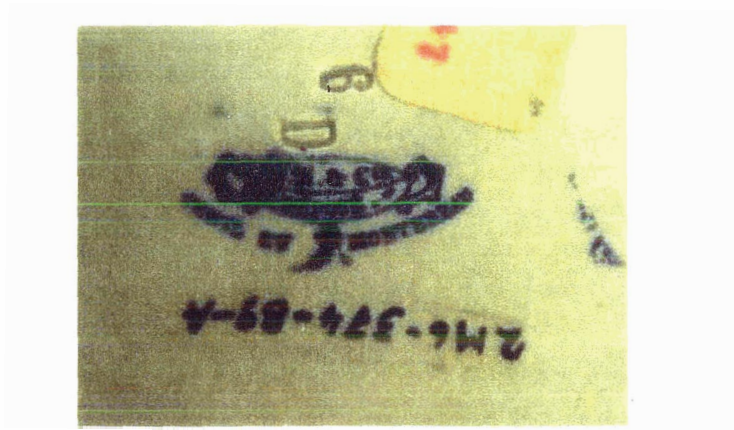


Figure 13. Creil et Montereau Maker's Mark

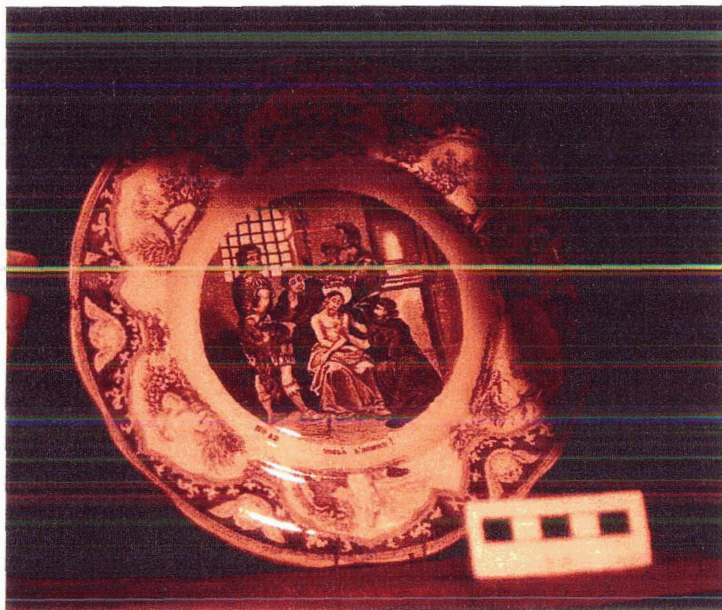


Figure 14. Creil et Montereau Transfer print Plate

Another datable vessel in the museum collection was a blue transfer print tea cup with the maker's mark "Copeland Late Spode." The manufacturer is the British Spode/Copeland company which produced popular transfer printed wares beginning in the late 18th century (Lloyd Thomas 1974:3). The mark on the piece in the convent museum dates to between 1847 and 1867 (Kovel 1995:247; Sussman 1979:241). The

ceramics produced by Copeland were widely used in Britain and were exported widely throughout North and South America.

Two pieces on display in the museum include ceramics made by the French company David Johnston, and marked J. Vieillard & Cie., Bordeaux (Fournier García 1990:113). One piece is a refined white earthenware molded bowl with pink bands around the rim. The other is a refined white earthenware bowl that has been hand painted pink, green, and blue, depicting grapes and leaves. These pieces date between 1836 and 1845 (Fournier García 1990:113). Although little information is available on this manufacturer, it is clear that their ceramic wares were being exported throughout Central and South America. Other pieces by this manufacturer have been identified in a private collection in Cuenca (Jamieson 2000:198) and also in the ex-convent of San Jeronimo in Mexico City (Fournier García 1990).

One unique piece from the museum collection is a large bowl with green transfer-print decoration. The decoration on the bowl is entitled "Sea Flower" (Figure 15) as indicated on the maker's mark (Figure 16). It is probable that the designer and manufacturer were English companies from Staffordshire. The creator of the Sea Flower design is probably the Herbert Minton & Company, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire who produced this design between 1845 and 1868 (Cushion and Honey 1968:263). The mark that appears on the vessel in the convent is not identical to the one produced by Herbert Minton & Company but is similar. Although the manufacturer of the vessel is unclear, it is probable that the vessel was made by J. & T. Lockett (1836-1859) from Longton, Staffordshire (Godden 1963:25). The J. & T. Lockett company is the only company listed in the British ceramic manufacturer literature that used the initials "J. & T. L." similar to

the mark on the Sea Flower vessel. This company may have purchased or copied the Sea Flower design for production.

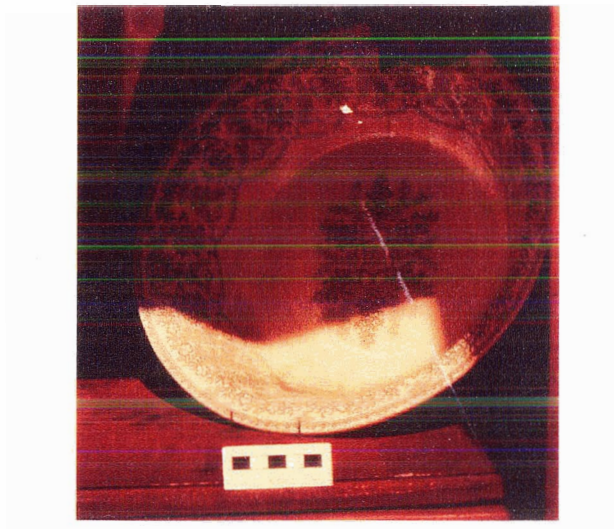


Figure 15. Sea Flower Transfer print Design



Figure 16. Sea Flower Maker's Mark

The majority of pieces in the museum collection were either not labeled with maker's marks or the marks were illegible. As stated earlier, 80 % of the ceramic ware on display were refined earthenwares and porcelain and were decorated in a variety of ways, including transfer print, hand painted, stamped, sponged, decaled, and gilded (Table 1). The pieces range in age with some dating to the late 18th century up to the mid 20th

century. Most of the refined earthenware pieces in the museum collection were imported from both England and continental Europe. It is difficult to tell, however, whether these pieces were expensive to import or whether they were readily available in Cuenca after Independence. The decoration of the vessels gives some indication as to the cost of the vessels when they were manufactured. For example, sponge painted or stamped wares were produced on inexpensive earthenwares and in large quantities in Britain throughout the 19th century. These items were made mainly for export and appear in 19th century archaeological assemblages throughout the United States (Majewski and O'Brien 1987:161). Similarly, hand-painted vessels like those on display in the museum, were popular between 1840 and 1860 in Britain (Majewski and O'Brien 1987:159).

Information about the cost of imported vessels throughout the 19th and early 20th century has not been a subject of research in Ecuador. Although most of the vessels are inexpensive by North American standards, the cost and availability of these items in Cuenca is not easy to determine. Furthermore, because these pieces are now in a museum, it is even more difficult to determine their role in convent life. It is possible that these pieces were expensive vessels special to the convent and were kept for sentimental value. They could also have been pieces of whole sets used daily by the nuns. The museum pieces do show that the convent throughout the 19th and 20th century had access to imported goods coming from England, France, and Holland. Of the identifiable pieces represented in the museum collection five are from continental Europe and three are from Britain. Unlike most historic sites in North America which are dominated by British ceramics, this collection demonstrates access to a greater diversity of imported goods. The collection of ceramics studied from the ex-convent of San Jeronimo in Mexico City,

although much more diverse in kind and number, shows a similar trend with over 20 % of the ceramics coming from continental Europe (Fournier García 1990:198).

Archaeological Material from the Refectory

As stated earlier, the archaeological excavations undertaken in the Refectory of the convent yielded some interesting artifacts. However, because of the method of excavation and the lack of information about the excavation, the exact provenience of these items is impossible to determine. Therefore, I will discuss the artifacts from this excavation as a single collection as I am unable to identify contexts of different time periods from the excavated material.

The majority of artifacts from this excavation are coarse earthenware, such as local unglazed, slipped, and lead-glazed earthenwares, as well as local and imported majolicas (Table 2). These types of coarse earthenwares are commonly found in colonial, Republican, and modern contexts from archaeological sites in Cuenca and often make up a large portion of the excavated material (Jamieson 2000). Because the manufacture of local vessels has changed little from the colonial period, it is impossible to date these artifacts. Local ceramics were used throughout Cuenca in all households for cooking, storage, and for dining (Jamieson 2001:46). Of the excavated material from the Refectory, coarse earthenwares make up 48 % of the total number of artifacts (Table 2) with about 6.5 % of those being imported earthenwares (Table 3). Coarse earthenware brick and roof tile fragments often make up a major portion of excavated material from historic sites in Cuenca. In the Refectory excavations these elements were discarded without being counted.

Table 2. Excavated Artifacts from the Refectory

Material	N	%
Alabaster		
<i>Spindle Whorl</i>	1	0.0%
Bone/Shell		
<i>Unidentified</i>	874	29.1%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	1334	44.5%
<i>Roof tile</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Native ceramic</i>	7	0.2%
<i>Spindle Whorl</i>	4	0.1%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware</i>	93	3.1%
<i>Spindle Whorl</i>	2	0.1%
Imported Refined Earthenware		
<i>Tableware</i>	14	0.5%
<i>Other</i>	7	0.2%
Copper/Brass		
<i>Nail</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Clothing Fastener</i>	2	0.1%
Ferrous Metal		
<i>Nails</i>	242	8.1%
<i>Other Fasteners</i>	8	0.3%
<i>Strapping</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Other</i>	15	0.5%
Flora		
<i>Seeds</i>	149	5.0%
<i>Gourd - decorated</i>	6	0.2%
Glass		
<i>Bottle Glass</i>	40	1.3%
<i>Tableware</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Pane Glass</i>	22	0.7%
<i>Light Bulb Glass</i>	49	1.6%
<i>Medical Vial</i>	91	3.0%
Lime/Cal		
<i>Fragments</i>	2	0.1%
Plaster		
<i>Construction Material</i>	2	0.1%
Plastic		
<i>Medical Vial</i>	5	0.2%
<i>Toothbrush</i>	1	0.0%
Lithics		
<i>Hammerstone</i>	1	0.0%
<i>Masonry flakes</i>	15	0.5%
Wax		
<i>Candle wax</i>	2	0.1%
Wood		
<i>Furnishing</i>	1	0.0%
<i>Handle, cookware</i>	1	0.0%
Total	2998	100.0%

Table 3. Ceramic Tableware and Cookware from the Refectory Excavations

Ware Type	N	%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Plain</i>	225	15.5%
<i>Slipped</i>	729	50.3%
<i>Lead Glazed</i>	53	3.7%
<i>Majolica</i>	127	8.8%
<i>Unidentified</i>	207	14.3%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Imported Majolica</i>	4	0.3%
<i>Sevilla Majolica</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Panamanian Majolica</i>	26	1.8%
<i>Olive Jar</i>	58	4.0%
<i>Spanish Redware</i>	4	0.3%
Refined White Earthenware		
<i>Transfer Printed</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Hand Painted</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Banded</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Plain</i>	2	0.1%
Porcelain		
<i>Blue Underglaze</i>	7	0.5%
<i>Blue Underglaze with Overpaint</i>	1	0.1%
Total	1448	100.0%

Imported ceramics from Spain and other areas of colonial Spanish America

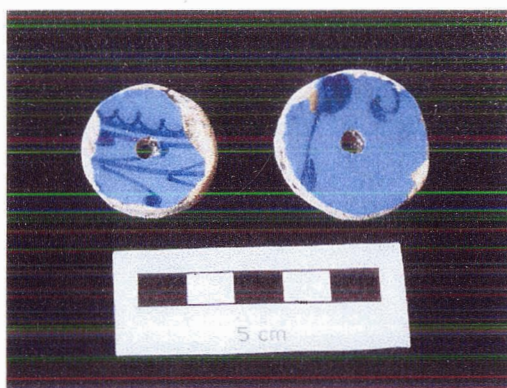
can be an excellent indicator of time period as well as relative wealth of households and institutions. The imported ceramics found in the Refectory excavation include utilitarian Olive Jars, Spanish Redware vessels, imported majolicas, as well as refined earthenwares imported from Europe. The utilitarian Olive Jars make up 4 % of all ceramic ware from the collection and are the most abundant of the imported wares in the collection (Table 3). Olive jars were imported into Spanish America beginning the late 15th century until the end of the 18th century and were mainly used for storage and for transporting goods (Deagan 1987:31). A small number of Spanish Redware vessels were also excavated from the Refectory. These were hollowware vessels imported from Spain and used as utilitarian vessels throughout the colonial period (Deagan 1987:31).

Of the imported goods found in the Refectory excavation, there were 26 pieces identified as Panama majolica. These ceramic tablewares were manufactured in Panama starting in the late 16th or early 17th century and are found throughout Central and South America (Deagan 1987:92; Jamieson 2001; Rovira 2001). Panamanian ceramics are identified by their dark red paste and thick white or green tinted glaze (Deagan 1987:91). The decoration of these vessels is characterised by a thick, white background glaze and they often have polychrome decoration, such as blue on white, blue and brown on white, and brown on white. The existence of Panamanian ceramics in this collection shows that the convent was importing and using these ceramics at the beginning of the colonial period as the vessels were produced mainly from the early to mid 17th century (Deagan 1987:92). Panamanian majolicas are often associated with elite households in colonial

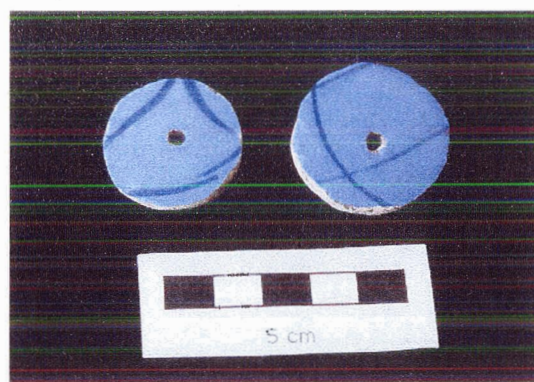
society and were often used as a way to reinforce the family's Spanish ethnicity and in doing so distinguish themselves from the lower classes (Jamieson 2001:46).

Another imported ware type in the Refectory collection is Sevilla ware. Although there are only three pieces of Sevilla ware, they demonstrate the types of wares available to nuns of the convent in the 17th century. Sevilla wares, as defined by Deagan (1987:61), are majolicas thought to have been made in Spain beginning in the mid 16th century and were influenced by similar and very popular Italian wares. Sevilla White is one variation of the ware type which has a white glaze on both the interior and exterior of the vessel. One sherd of this type was found in the Refectory collection.

The other two pieces of Sevilla ceramic are Sevilla blue on blue, characterized by a light to medium blue background glaze on which a darker blue glaze is painted in patterns (Deagan 1987:64). This ware type has also been noted to occasionally have yellow or orange overpainted designs (Deagan 1987:64). Sevilla blue on blue appears in the Spanish colonies in the mid 16th century and is popular until about 1630 -1640 (Deagan 1987:64). The two pieces from the Refectory collection are interesting because they are spindle whorls made out of recycled Sevilla blue on blue sherds (Figure 17). One of the spindle whorls also has yellow overpainting as part of the decoration (Figure 17a).



a.



b.



Front



Profile



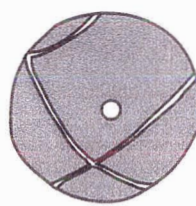
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Front



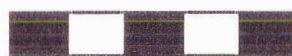
Profile



Back

Legend

-  Light blue glaze
-  Dark blue glaze
-  Yellow overglaze
-  Eroded



5cm

c.

Figure 17. Sevilla Blue on Blue Spindle Whorls, a. blue lace-like decoration, b. blue glaze decoration, c. drawing and profiles of spindle whorls

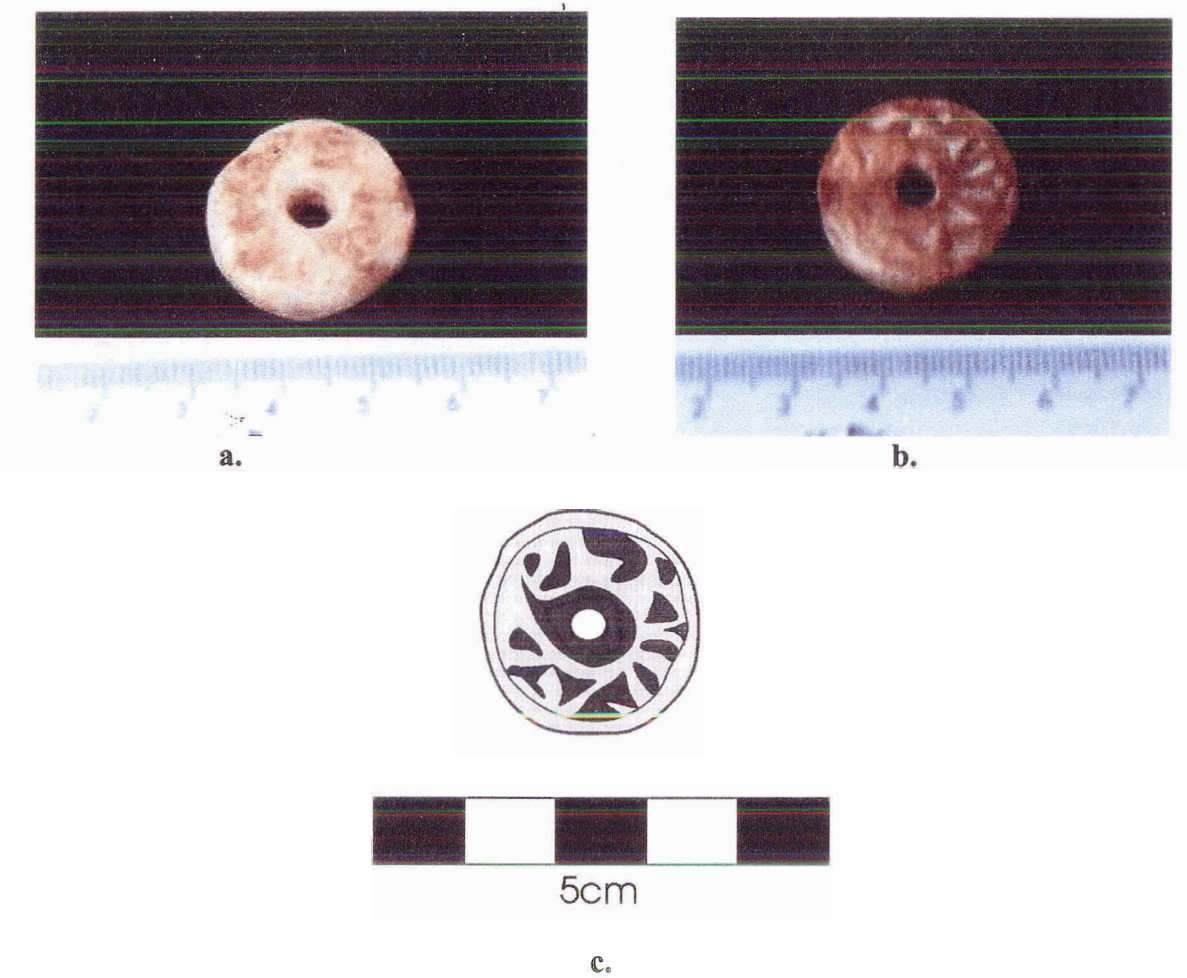


Figure 18. Alabaster Spindle Whorl, a. front side of spindle, b. back, c. drawing and detail of carving on back

Other ceramic spindle whorls were found in this collection, but most were made from unglazed coarse earthenware. The two Sevilla blue on blue ceramic spindle whorls are interesting because they are made from an imported ceramic that previously has not been found archaeologically in Cuenca (Jamieson 2002, personal communication). It is clear that at some point, a woman in the convent owned and used these imported vessels. The rarity of this type of ware in the collection suggests that the wealthy and elite members of cuencano society had access to these goods, either by purchasing them or bringing them from Spain.

Another unique spindle whorl in the Refectory collection was carved out of alabaster. This spindle whorl is intricately carved on both sides (Figure 18). Spindle whorls have been manufactured throughout the world for centuries to aid in the spinning of fibres (such as cotton, sheep's wool, llama wool). In South America, spindle whorls have been discovered on archaeological sites dating to both pre-hispanic and colonial periods and have been identified in various types of materials, including metal, stone, and ceramic (Smith and Hirth 1988:351). It is interesting to note the marked difference between the spindle whorls made out of coarse unglazed earthenwares and those that are highly decorated, such as the alabaster spindle whorl. A spindle whorl that is decorated and carved was likely owned by an elite woman in the convent. The presence of such spindle whorls raises interesting questions about the activities undertaken by women inside the convent. Spinning wool is an activity generally associated with poverty and indigenous ethnicity. It is clear that nuns of the black veil were spinning wool, like the lower class women in the convent, as a demonstration of their vow of poverty and religious devotion. The highly carved spindle whorl were therefore used to distinguish a

nun of the black veil from other women in the convent. The presence of spindle whorls in the archaeological record provides unique insight into the daily work and activities of the nuns – an area of convent life that is impossible to access through archival research.

Refined ceramics such as refined white earthenware and porcelain made up less than 1 % of the artifacts found in the Refectory (Table 2). More than one half of these refined ceramics were Chinese export porcelains with blue underglaze (Table 3). These ceramic types are found throughout the Spanish colonies and were available mainly from 1573 to the end of the 18th century (Deagan 1987:96). Because the pieces from the collection are very small, it is difficult to identify the decoration type and to determine when they were manufactured. One piece however, was decorated with an orange/red overglaze paint. According to Deagan (1987:100), overglaze decoration known as “Chinese Imari” appears mostly in first half of the 18th century. Of the porcelain pieces, two had annular ring bases, both with small diameters of 5 - 6 cm. The vessels were probably all small bowls or cups for serving chocolate typical of other Chinese export porcelains found in Cuenca (Jamieson 2000:196).

A small quantity of refined white earthenware was also found in the Refectory excavation. This type of ceramic was imported from Europe beginning in the early 19th century, as described above, and continued throughout the Republican period in Ecuador. The vessels from the Refectory include plain as well as transfer printed and hand painted wares (Table 3).

Although the provenience and context of the artifacts from the Refectory remain unclear, the material culture can give us valuable information about the economy of the convent and the types of ceramics used by the convent. The presence of imported ceramic

wares from the colonial period demonstrates that the women entering the convent had access to expensive imported goods either by purchasing them, acquiring them through donation, or by bringing these goods with them into the convent. It is probable that the elite women of the convent were using material culture to distinguish themselves from the lower class women in the convent. The use of tableware and dining as signifiers of status has been discussed in the study of majolica wares in the Spanish colonies (Jamieson 2001). Although local and coarse earthenwares make up a large part of the assemblage and were used extensively in the convent, the presence of Panamanian wares, Spanish majolicas, and Chinese export porcelains suggest that imported pieces were socially and economically significant in the convent during the 17th and 18th centuries. Similarly, the presence of finely crafted objects such as the alabaster spindle whorl may also indicate that the nuns of the black veil in the convent were using everyday material culture to reinforce their identity as Spanish and *criolla* women and distinguish themselves from the lower class, and non-Spanish, women in the convent. In looking at the excavations I conducted in the Concepción Museum, further conclusions can be made about women living in the convent and the use of material culture.

The Concepción Museum Excavations

As discussed in Chapter 4, the excavations I conducted in the Concepción Museum during the summer of 2002 yielded both colonial, Republican, and modern contexts. Because the artifacts were excavated systematically we can gain greater insight into how the material culture in the convent changed over time. The following is a discussion of the excavated material grouped together by the date of the contexts.

Ceramic artifacts make up the majority of the assemblage from all levels and therefore I have focused my analysis on these elements.

Colonial Material Culture

The colonial context excavated from Unit 1 in the convent museum included both lots 5 and 6, as described in Chapter 4. The context produced a total of 793 artifacts of which 80 % were earthenwares including brick and roof tile fragments, local coarse earthenwares, and majolicas (Table 4). Five Olive Jar fragments, four Panamanian majolica fragments, including both plain white glazed and polychrome, and three fragments of Spanish Redware indicate that the context predates the 1770s (Table 5). The production of Panamanian ceramics ended in 1670 when the city of Panama Vieja was destroyed (Jamieson 2001:49). This context could date to either the 17th or 18th century. Similar to other parts of Cuenca, the colonial context contains relatively few sherds of imported ceramics from Panama and Spain. Of all ceramics excavated from this context (not including brick and tile fragments), Spanish and Panama wares make up 3.6 % of the total. In a similar domestic colonial context excavated by Jamieson (2001:53), the frequency of imported majolicas from Spain and Panama was 3.74 %. The low frequency of these wares could be the result of limited access to these products during the 17th century. Jamieson (2001:55) has argued that because of the location of Cuenca in the Andean highlands and because of restrictions on trade within the Viceroyalty of New Spain, majolica wares coming from Panama and Spain were not as accessible in Cuenca as they were in major trade centers such as Mexico City.

Table 4. Excavated Artifacts from the Colonial Context

Material	N	%
Bone		
<i>Bone, unidentified</i>	147	18.5%
Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Brick</i>	40	5.0%
<i>Roof tile</i>	269	33.9%
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	305	38.5%
<i>Unidentified</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Figurine</i>	1	0.1%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	21	2.6%
Copper/brass		
<i>Wire</i>	1	0.1%
Ferrous Metal		
<i>Nail</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Unidentified</i>	1	0.1%
Flora		
<i>Seed/pit (flora)</i>	2	0.2%
Glass		
<i>Tableware</i>	1	0.1%
Marble		
<i>Masonry flakes</i>	1	0.1%
Slag		
<i>Slag</i>	2	0.2%
Total	793	100.0%

Table 5. Excavated Ceramic Tableware and Cookware from the Colonial Context

Ware Type	N	%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Plain</i>	109	33.4%
<i>Slipped</i>	116	35.6%
<i>Lead Glazed</i>	32	9.8%
<i>Majolica</i>	46	14.1%
<i>Unidentified</i>	2	0.6%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Imported Majolica</i>	9	2.8%
<i>Panamanian Majolica</i>	4	1.2%
<i>Olive Jar</i>	5	1.5%
<i>Spanish Redware</i>	3	0.9%
Total	326	100.0%

The number of majolicas in this context from sources other than Panama and Spain shows that during the 17th and 18th centuries the nuns had access to ceramics from

various production centers in the Spanish colonies. Nine pieces of an imported ceramic ware with a compact, orange to orange-red paste, were recovered from the excavation. Decorations on these vessels range from cream or white to greenish-cream thick background glaze with blue, green, or brown decoration (Figure 19). None of the examples from this context had polychrome decorations. This ware type could possibly be coming from Quito or Lima, as it is known that majolicas were made in both these centers. Details about production in these cities and identification of specific pastes and decoration have not been fully studied and therefore it is difficult to determine their origin (Jamieson 2001). Archival sources describe wares being produced in Quito as early as 1635; however, the documents are unclear as to whether the ceramics were tin-glazed majolicas or lead-glazed wares. Material recovered archaeologically from colonial contexts in Quito show a majolica with an orange paste that was being produced locally (Jamieson 2001:54). Similarly, in Lima excavations have produced majolica wares identical to those made in Panama except for the colour of the paste (Flores Espinoza et al. 1981:52). Although the source of these majolica wares is currently impossible to determine, it is clear that these majolicas were not being made locally and are likely from a larger Andean city.

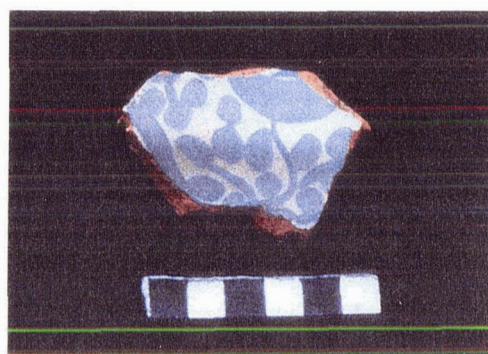


Figure 19. Imported Blue on White Majolica

In contrast to imported majolicas, locally made majolicas make up a significant portion of the ceramics from the colonial context. These ceramic wares total 14 % of all the ceramic vessels from this context (Table 5). Local majolicas are characterised by a thin cream background glaze with green and/or brown decoration. The paste of Cuenca majolica is “reddish yellow to pink in colour (7.5YR 6/8 to 7.5 YR 8/4 [Munsell Color Company 1975]), with few visible inclusions” (Jamieson 2001:54). It is currently unclear as to when majolica wares were first produced in Cuenca; their presence in this colonial context seems to suggest that they were being produced quite early in the colonial period. Because local majolicas make up a significant portion of the ceramic vessels from the colonial context, it suggests that women in the convent were using these wares on a daily basis for both cooking and as tablewares.

The presence of a large number of unglazed and lead-glazed coarse earthenware sherds is also significant in this context; 33.4 % of all the ceramic sherds are plain vessels, 35.6 % are slipped either red, brown, or cream, and 9.8 % are lead-glazed (Table 3). Similarly, in other domestic contexts excavated in Cuenca slipped and plain coarse earthenware make up the majority (80 %) of all ceramic sherds (Jamieson 2000:152). The abundance of these vessels in a colonial context shows that although imported and fine ceramics were used in certain ways in the convent, the nuns were still relying on coarse earthenware for cooking and storage. Similarly, hearth blackened sherds total 33.4 % of all local ceramic wares from this context. It is clear that the nuns were relying heavily on local wares for cooking. Furthermore, the lower class women in the convent, including the *donadas*, servants, and slaves, probably did not have access to imported ceramics and were likely using unglazed and lead glazed coarse earthenware for serving and dining.

Jamieson (2000:183) points out that the elite of the city of Cuenca probably used unglazed ceramics extensively throughout the colonial period as did most households in colonial society.

The ceramics excavated from the colonial context in the museum suggest that the nuns in the convent had access to a variety of imported goods in the colonial period. The low frequency of imported goods could be the result of the lack of access to these ceramic wares in general in Cuenca. As stated earlier, the frequency of imported and local ware in the convent is similar to other excavated collections from colonial sites in Cuenca. Although local majolicas and coarse earthenwares were continuously used during this period, imported pieces were likely used as accent pieces in dining and for display.

Republican Material Culture

As described in Chapter 4, contexts dating to the Republican Period in Ecuador (post 1830) were uncovered in the excavations at the Concepción Museum. The context in Unit 1 was capped by modern cultural material dating to post 1900. In Units 3 and 4, the Republican material was overlaid by an *empedrada* which likely dates to the building of the infirmary in 1884 (see Chapter 4). I have separated the contexts as such in order to discuss how the material culture changed from the colonial period into the Republican period. The contexts dating to this time period include Unit 1, lots 3 and 4, Unit 3, lots 4 to 8, and Unit 4, lots 5 to 17. These lots contained a variety of cultural material including bone, ceramic, glass, and construction materials (Table 6). The most abundant artifact type, as in other contexts, is ceramic coarse earthenware making up 43 % of the

assemblage. Ceramic roof tiles and bricks make up 27.4 and 2.4 % of the total, respectively. Bone fragments constitute 24.0 % of the artifacts and the remaining materials (approximately 2.0 % of the artifact count) are glass, refined ceramics, nails, shells, and lithic fragments.

The ceramic coarse earthenwares from Republican contexts include roof tile, bricks, imported majolica, local majolica, and unglazed, slipped, and lead glazed earthenwares. Of the 2396 coarse earthenware sherds, 76 were brick fragments, and 879 were roof tile fragments (Table 6). Construction materials are significant because throughout the 19th century the convent underwent many episodes of construction, such as the building of the *Panteón* which was completed in 1875, and the building of the infirmary completed in 1884 (see Chapter 4). Both of these buildings were constructed in the area where the excavations took place and therefore the abundance of construction material is expected.

The second largest category of earthenware found at the site are plain and slipped utilitarian vessels such as *ollas* (storage jars), bowls, and cooking pots. The plain ceramic vessels make up 40.6 % of ceramic sherds (not including brick and tile) and slipped wares, including red, brown, grey, and cream, represent 35.3 % of all ceramic vessels (Table 7). The large number of unglazed ceramic vessels suggests that the nuns in the convent were relying heavily on these vessels for cooking, storage, and possibly for serving. The frequency of unglazed ceramic vessels from this context is consistent with the frequency of these vessels from the colonial context described above. There is only a slight increase in the number of plain vessels and the number of slipped wares remains consistent.

Table 6. Excavated Artifacts from the Republican Context

Material	N	%
Bone/Shell		
<i>Unidentified Bone</i>	771	24.0%
<i>Unidentified Shell</i>	1	0.0%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	1379	43.0%
<i>Roof tile</i>	879	27.4%
<i>Brick</i>	76	2.4%
<i>Native ceramic</i>	1	0.0%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware</i>	61	1.9%
Imported Refined Earthenware		
<i>Tableware</i>	21	0.6%
Ferrous Metal		
<i>Nails</i>	1	0.0%
Glass		
<i>Bottle Glass</i>	4	0.1%
<i>Tableware</i>	6	0.2%
<i>Pane Glass</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Lighting Device</i>	1	0.0%
Lithics		
<i>Masonry flakes</i>	2	0.1%
Slag		
<i>Slag Fragments</i>	2	0.1%
Total	3207	100.0%

Table 7. Ceramic Tableware and Cookware from the Republican Context

Ware Type	N	%
Local Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Plain</i>	594	40.6%
<i>Slipped</i>	516	35.3%
<i>Lead Glazed</i>	79	5.4%
<i>Majolica</i>	190	13.0%
<i>Unidentified</i>	1	0.1%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Imported Majolica</i>	26	1.8%
<i>Imported Lead Glazed</i>	3	0.2%
<i>Sevilla Majolica</i>	3	0.2%
<i>Panamanian Majolica</i>	12	0.8%
<i>Olive Jar</i>	5	0.3%
<i>Spanish Redware</i>	12	0.8%
Refined White Earthenware		
<i>Creamware, Plain</i>	3	0.2%
<i>Transfer Printed</i>	10	0.7%
<i>Hand Painted</i>	1	0.1%
<i>Banded</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Plain</i>	2	0.1%
Porcelain		
<i>Blue Underglaze</i>	3	0.2%
Total	1462	100.0%

Local majolica wares similar to those present in the colonial context were also prevalent in the Republican context. The number of local majolicas remained consistent between the two periods as these wares make up 13.0 % of the total number of ceramics (Table 7). Lead glazed wares declined in frequency in the Republican contexts, however, making up only 5.4 % of ceramics compared to 9.8 % from the colonial period.

Imported ceramics continue to make up only a small portion of the assemblage in the Republican context. Olive Jars, Spanish Redware, Panamanian wares, and other imported majolicas make up approximately 4.2 % of the ceramic wares (Table 7). The Panamanian vessels included plain white/cream glazed wares, polychrome blue on white, as well as a polychrome “A” design, with green, brown, and black decoration and another with blue, yellow, and brown decoration (Figure 20) (Deagan 1987:91). The majority of the imported coarse earthenwares were the possible Quito/Lima imports (see above). These vessels were both green lead glazed and majolicas, with plain white/cream glaze and polychrome blue, green, and brown glaze.

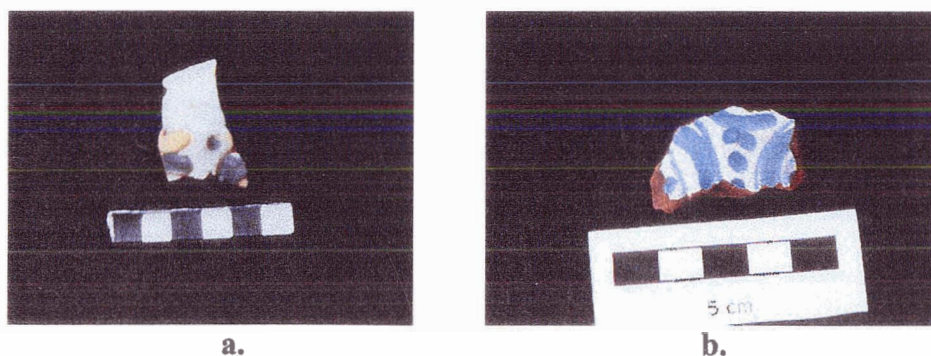


Figure 20. Panama Majolica, a. blue, brown, and yellow on white, b. blue on white

Another important element of the ceramic artifacts excavated from the Republican context is the refined imported earthenware that makes up a small, but significant, part of the excavated material. These refined earthenwares include creamware, refined white

earthenware, and porcelain. At the end of the 18th century, England began producing and exporting refined ceramics beginning with creamware and pearlware in the 1770s. In Cuenca, previous excavations have produced very limited amounts of creamware and pearlware from urban sites (Jamieson 2000:196). Only three sherds of plain bodied creamware were recovered from the excavation in the museum and no pearlware was found (Table 7).

Refined white earthenwares from European companies were produced beginning about 1830 and by 1850 the elite of Cuenca began importing these items on a larger scale (Jamieson 2000:197). A small number of these vessels were recovered from the excavation with decoration types varying from transfer printed patterns to hand painted wares. Although these wares make up 1.4 % of the total number of ceramic artifacts excavated from this context, they provide important information about the types of imported goods being used in the convent. It is clear that the nuns did have access to European ceramic goods throughout the Republican period as shown by the excavated material as well as the ceramic pieces from the museum collection described above. However, this access seemed to be restricted as the number of vessels is very low compared to the number of local coarse earthenwares. Similarly, in other urban excavations in Cuenca, refined white earthenwares make up only 1.5 % of ceramic sherd counts (Jamieson 2000:197).

The material culture from the Republican period demonstrates that there was little change in the types of ceramics being used in the convent from the colonial period. The one major difference was the introduction of imported refined ceramic wares from Europe. It is clear that, as in other parts of Cuenca, the nuns of the Concepción Convent

were mainly using local ceramic majolicas and unglazed and lead glazed coarse earthenwares on a daily basis. Imported pieces, such as those from England and France, were used probably as special and decorative, or as accent pieces during dining throughout the 19th century.

The Concepción Convent and Material Culture

The material culture presented in this analysis allows us to understand the social and economic dynamics going on within the convent and within the city of Cuenca throughout the colonial and Republican periods. It is clear from the two excavated collections that the women in the convent were using an abundance of local coarse earthenwares as these wares make up the majority of the ceramic artifacts from both excavations. Other excavations in and around the city of Cuenca have also shown a similar abundance of local ceramic wares as compared to imported wares (Jamieson 2000). Similarly, work done in other parts of Spanish America, such as Puerto Real, Haiti, and Florida, show a large number of “aboriginal” or “non-European” utilitarian wares (McEwan 1995; Deagan 1983).

The presence of imported wares produced in the colonial period shows that the women within the convent did have access to high status imported goods from Panama and Spain. These goods could have been brought into the convent by a nun at her profession or they could have been purchased by a nun or by the convent. The low percentage of these items in the Concepción Convent excavations is similar to the findings in Jamieson’s (2000) urban colonial excavations. Because of the location of the city in the Andean highlands, importing goods from Spain and other parts of the empire

would have been expensive. It is possible that access to these goods was restricted in Cuenca because of the city's location; therefore, a low frequency of these items along with their presence in the mainly elite and wealthy households of the city would be expected (Figure 21). Similarly trade between the colonies was severely restricted by the Crown during the colonial period. It was not until these restriction were lifted at the end of the 18th century that imported goods began to appear more frequently in the Andes (Van Buren 1999:118).

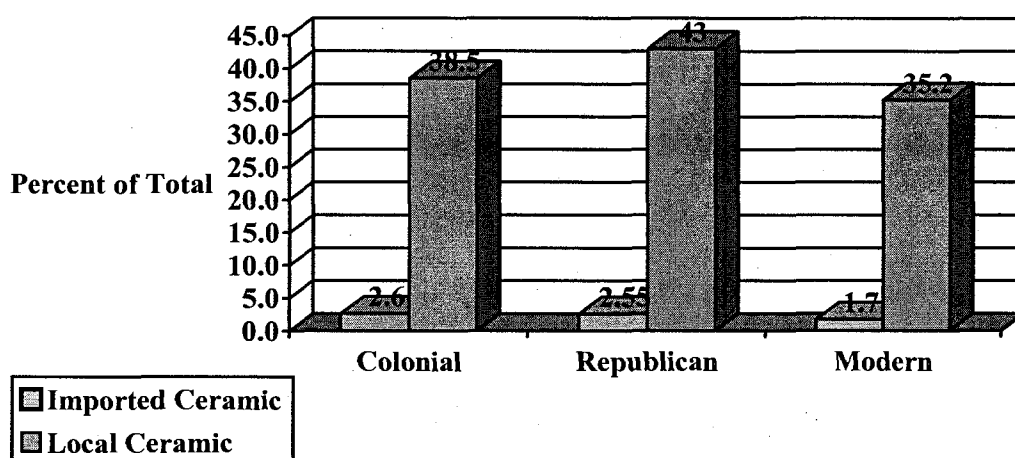


Figure 21. Number of Ceramic Artifacts as a Percent of Total

Throughout the Republican period the prosperity of the convent declined considerably, as discussed in Chapter 3. The excavated material shows that the convent continued to use an abundance of local coarse earthenwares (Figure 21). By the mid- to late-19th century, however, less expensive imported ceramics such as refined white earthenware from Europe became accessible around the world. The presence of these items in the archaeological record and in the museum collection shows that the nuns had access to imported European wares and purchased them. However, the relatively small

number of European wares in the excavated material suggests that they were not the predominant tablewares in the convent in the Republican period. A similar situation occurred in other excavated houses in Cuenca (Jamieson 2000:197). In contrast, excavated material from the ex-convent of San Jeronimo in Mexico City shows European refined earthenware constituting 11.36 % of all excavated ceramic vessels (Fournier García 1990:251). This is probably because of the size of the city as well as its greater proximity and access to European markets in the 19th century (Fournier García 1990:33).

By the turn of the 20th century, refined white earthenware from England and Europe became very popular in Cuenca and it also became much more accessible. It is interesting to note, however, that the modern contexts dating to post-1900 show a decrease in the number of refined earthenwares, making up less than 1 % of excavated ceramics (Table 8, Figure 21). As access to these imported materials increased, their presence in the convent declined. Considering the economic situation of the convent in the 20th century, it is not surprising that imported wares, which were and continue to be more expensive than local wares, were unaffordable to the nuns in the Concepción convent. Therefore, their access to these goods declined. The decline in imported ceramics could also be the result of the restrictions continuously being placed on the convent by ecclesiastical authorities to conform to the vow of poverty.

**Table 8. Summary of Excavated Material
from Modern Contexts**

Material	N	Percent
Bone		
<i>Bone, unidentified</i>	427	15.0%
<i>Shell, unidentified</i>	3	0.1%
Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Brick</i>	112	3.9%
<i>Roof tile</i>	1069	37.6%
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	1001	35.2%
<i>Figurine</i>	1	0.0%
<i>Native Ceramic</i>	1	0.0%
Imported Coarse Earthenware		
<i>Tableware/cookware</i>	30	1.1%
Refined Ceramic		
<i>Tableware</i>	18	0.6%
<i>Flooring</i>	1	0.0%
Ferrous Metal		
<i>Nail</i>	26	0.9%
<i>Other Fasteners</i>	5	0.2%
<i>Strapping</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Containers</i>	9	0.3%
<i>Scrap Metal</i>	3	0.1%
Flora		
<i>Seed/pit (flora)</i>	30	1.1%
Glass		
<i>Tableware</i>	5	0.2%
<i>Bottle</i>	7	0.2%
<i>Pane glass</i>	17	0.6%
<i>Lamp glass</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Decorative</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Medical vial</i>	1	0.0%
<i>Unidentified</i>	3	0.1%
Plaster		
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	11	0.4%
Plastic		
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	44	1.5%
Lithic		
<i>Masonry flakes</i>	2	0.1%
<i>Lithic debitage</i>	1	0.0%
Silver		
<i>Religious ornament</i>	1	0.0%
Textile		
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	4	0.1%
Tin		
<i>Foil</i>	1	0.0%
Total	2839	100.0%

Chapter 6

Examining Gender, Class, and Economy in a Latin American Convent

The research I have conducted on the Concepción Convent of Cuenca, Ecuador, provides some interesting information about colonial society and how convents functioned in that society. Not only was the Concepción Convent a powerful economic and religious institution, but it also provided a space for elite women which allowed them economic and social freedoms not typically available to women in colonial society. Furthermore, my research addresses how the role of convents changed over time and the causes and effects of reform on these institutions. By examining the historical and archaeological record, some conclusions can be made as to how material culture functioned in the convent, the relationships between the convent and the city of Cuenca, the effects of social and economic forces on the nuns, and how all of these elements changed over time.

Colonial Society and the Convent: Wealth, Power, and Prestige

Throughout the colonial period, convents were important institutions in the cities in which they were founded. They provided a space for unmarried women, they acted as a symbol of the moral beliefs and spiritual devotion of the conquistadors, and also a

symbol of wealth and prestige for the city (Lavrin 1986). Most convents in colonial society became wealthy and powerful institutions as landholders, creditors, and benefactors of elite society. The Concepción Convent of Cuenca was no exception. With money from dowries, donations, and landholdings, the convent and individual nuns began increasing their own economic influence and lending money to the wealthy landholders of the city. Strong relationships developed between the elite families of Cuenca and the convent; the elite provided their daughters as nuns of the black veil and the convent provided the families with capital for investment (Kennedy Troya and Sigüenza Crespo 1990). As in other urban centers, the Concepción Convent and the nuns within became wealthy and powerful throughout the colonial period. The power and prestige associated with these women was displayed in a variety of ways both within and outside the convent walls.

The prosperity enjoyed by the convent allowed some of the women within freedoms that were not available to other women in colonial society. Inside the convent elite Spanish or *criolla* women were able to display their power in society. The ideas of moral, racial, and religious superiority typical of Spanish colonial society were ingrained in the way convents were organized and run. Nuns of the black veil were able to recreate their social position inside the convent walls by creating a hierarchy based on ethnicity, class, and economic power (Burns 1999). Throughout the colonial period the nuns of the black veil were continually separating themselves from the lower classes of women in the convent.

The separation of nuns of the black veil in convent society manifested itself in a variety of ways. The rules of the convent allowed these women privileges such as voting

in convent elections, holding office, owning personal possessions, and having personal servants and slaves. An important physical separation, however, was the elite women's ability to purchase and live in their own private cell. The architecture of the convent demonstrates the physical separation used by the elite nuns to distinguish themselves from lower classes of women. The nuns of the white veil, servants, and slaves often lived in communal spaces in the convent; however, the nuns of the black veil were able to separate themselves physically and economically by purchasing their own space and rejecting the communal life.

Similarly, the nuns of the black veil used objects and material culture to signify their separation and difference from the lower classes. The most significant is the use of the black veil for the elite, ethnically Spanish nuns, versus a white veil, for the poorer, lower class nuns. As discussed in Chapter 2, nuns of the white veil took the same religious vows as nuns of the black veil; however, their separation was the result of social and economic factors.

The archaeological material excavated from the convent suggests that dining and tablewares were also used as signifiers of class and Spanish ethnicity. Imported goods found in the excavations show that some women in the convent had access to these items and were using them. The small number of imported wares such as Panamanian and Spanish majolica from the convent excavations and from other excavations in Cuenca suggest that these items were difficult to acquire in colonial Cuenca. Access to these items was likely restricted to the wealthiest families in society who were able to afford the cost of having the items transported into the Andean highlands. Because of their association with wealth and Spain, imported items such as tablewares were probably used

as a symbol of economic power and Spanish ethnicity. In the convent, all women relied heavily on local ceramic wares for everyday use. Everyday objects, such as ceramic dining wares, were used in colonial society to create distinctions between groups of people. The ideas of racial and ethnic superiority were duplicated within the convent by the nuns of the black veil who used imported majolicas to emphasize their difference from lower class women, not only economically but also ethnically.

The economic power gained by the nuns of the black veil allowed these women to separate themselves as socially superior women in the convent. The nuns of the black veil also found themselves in a position to display this power not only inside the convent, but outside as well. The prosperity of the institution allowed the nuns to expand their landholdings in and around the city of Cuenca and to further invest in the local economy. By the early 18th century, the convent was able to take on a major episode of construction that symbolised the power of the institution. The building of the convent church from 1712 to 1720 was a major economic undertaking resulting in a dominant architectural symbol in the city center which still exists today.

Although the vows taken by these women required them to lead a life of poverty, obedience, chastity, and enclosure, it is clear that these vows were freely interpreted by the nuns to suit their needs. The freedoms the nuns had in colonial times manifested themselves in many ways, from outright disobedience of ecclesiastical authorities to demonstrations of wealth, power, and ethnic superiority within and outside the convent. In Cuenca, as in other parts of the colonies, the nuns of the black veil were often entertaining business men and other important members of society with parties, music, and pageants in the *locutorios* of the convent. Although entertaining visitors went directly

against the vows of enclosure, the Bishop of Quito was far enough away and visited infrequently enough that the nuns were able to disregard many of the bishops' warnings and orders.

Throughout the colonial period, the economic power of the Concepción Convent in Cuencano society allowed the nuns to resist ecclesiastical authority and create a space that was slightly detached from patriarchal rule. The nuns of the black veil were able to create an environment that reflected the beliefs of Spanish colonial society and maintain themselves as a socially, economically, and ethnically, distinct group. In doing so, the nuns were also able to create a space for elite women that upheld the traditional idea of enclosure for women and at the same time challenged traditional roles for women by allowing nuns freedom to participate in activities not available to other women in society.

Bourbon and Republican Reform: A Downward Spiral

Reform of the church in Spanish colonial society began in the late 18th century and continued well into the Republican period. These reforms brought about many changes for convents throughout Ecuador and were exacerbated by economic crisis and later by economic reform from the Republican government. The Concepción Convent severely felt the affects of these factors and eventually was transformed because of them.

Bourbon reform began in the mid-18th century and had a major impact on the church throughout the Spanish colonies. The Spanish Crown began to see the church as excessively wealthy and an obstacle to economic growth and development. Religious institutions became targets of criticism and ecclesiastical authorities began looking for ways to reinforce their control over these institutions (Burns 1999). In Cuenca, the

creation of a diocese in the city in 1787 was a major event which eventually led to severe reform of the convent. The newly appointed bishop wanted to bring the convent under the strict authority of ecclesiastical officials. Efforts by the bishop to reform the convent, however, were continuously resisted by the nuns.

Economic crisis and reform had an even greater impact on the Concepción Convent. By the end of the 18th century the nuns were having increasing difficulty recovering payments on *censos* and loans and were spending more money in legal battles trying to recover some of their assets. The economic problems the nuns were facing from the late 18th century through the Republican Period were aggravated by diminished interest in the church on the part of Cuenca's elite. Elite families were not as interested in investing in the church and the number of women entering the convent was on the decline. The loss of dowry payments severely affected the income of the convent. Despite efforts to regain some of their income, economic hardship continued to plague the convent.

The material culture of the convent changed little from the colonial period into the Republican period. The only major difference was the introduction of refined earthenware from Europe and England. The number of these items found archaeologically was very small, suggesting that access to these items was limited for the women in the convent. The museum pieces give some indication as to where the items were being imported from in the 19th century and shows they were probably special and highly valued. However, it seems that the small number of imported items in the convent in the 19th century may have fulfilled the same function as the imported majolica tableware in the colonial period. Although the convent was under reform, hierarchies

inside the convent continued to exist well into the 20th century. The nuns of the black veil may have continued using expensive imported goods to signal their economic privilege, but it is unlikely that these goods were being used to reinforce ethnic difference.

In the mid 19th century, access to refined European earthenware began to increase in Ecuador. By the turn of the 20th century, these items were quite common throughout the country (Jamieson 2000). Excavated material from the convent, however, shows a decline in the number of imported wares from 20th century contexts. This could be the result of two factors: church reform and economic hardships. In 1885 the Bishop of Cuenca demanded that the nuns begin living a completely communal life and that they use only local ceramics and wooden utensils in accordance with their vow of poverty. Although it is difficult to determine if these demands were followed, the decline in the number of imported wares suggests that access to these items was restricted by ecclesiastical authorities. In the early 20th century, the Republican government implemented economic reforms which destroyed the convent's already failing economy. The nuns found themselves falling into poverty and at this point probably could not afford the imported wares. As access to imported goods increased in Cuenca, the nuns were increasingly restricted from using and purchasing these items not only because of economic hardship, but also because of church authority.

The architectural decline of the convent beginning in the late 18th century also demonstrates resistance to ecclesiastical authority and economic hardship. As the convent's economic power declined, the nuns were no longer able to maintain the buildings on their property. Concerns about hygiene, health, and sanitation brought forth

by the bishop forced the convent to take on expensive construction projects.

However, the bishop's concerns were often repeated for years before construction actually began and the buildings often took several more years to complete. Resistance to ecclesiastical authority, along with a failing economy, probably led to major delays in construction as the nuns were unable to afford building expenses and they ultimately had control over their space within the city. As the convent fell further into poverty in the 20th century, the nuns were no longer able to maintain this control and eventually had to give up some of their space to the secular city.

It is clear that although the nuns of the Concepción Convent were increasingly being forced under the control of church authorities, they continued to resist these forces. Not only were the women in the convent maintaining hierarchies, but they also continued to import forbidden goods into the convent. Unfortunately, over the last 100 years, the Concepción Convent has continued to decline further into poverty. The convent has adopted a new constitution and the hierarchies once prevalent in the convent no longer exist. The nuns maintain the cloister but have been forced to sell some parts and rent out other parts of the convent in order to maintain an income. Although the Concepción Convent has become increasingly segregated from the community, the nuns have maintained their presence in the City of Cuenca.

Convents in Archaeological Research

In history, convents in the Spanish colonies have received increasing amounts of attention. In archaeology, however, these institutions have been somewhat ignored. Similarly, there are few extensive studies on gender in colonial archaeology in South

America. The archaeological study of convents provides unique insight into colonial society and the role of women in that society. Convents provide researchers with a unique space to study. These spaces are inherently gendered as they are only inhabited by women. Although under the control of patriarchal institutions, these spaces provided some women freedoms not readily available in other areas of colonial society. Therefore the study of convents can be used to greatly enhance our knowledge of the roles of women in colonial society and how the boundaries of acceptable roles for women could be manipulated and challenged.

This study is an example of how archaeology can provide insight into the role of women in colonial society. By examining the historical literature and the material culture, this work demonstrates how the women within convents were active participants in their enclosure. Nuns were able to create an environment that replicated the outside world and in doing so create a space that maintained the racial, ethnic, and religious beliefs of colonial society. Because the material culture used by elite women is distinct, this study has mainly explored their role in convent life. However, through further archaeological and archival research on convents, we can gain a better understanding of the dynamics between women of different classes within the convent. It is clear that relationships of power and resistance occurred within the convent along ethnic, economic, and social lines; however, it is unclear how lower class women used space in the convent and how these women resisted oppressive forces.

Conclusion

The study of convents in colonial Spanish America is an area of research that needs more investigation. Convents were clearly important institutions in colonial society not only for religious reasons, but also for social and economic reasons. They functioned to uphold the Spanish ideals of female and family honour, acceptable gender roles, and ethnic, religious, and social hierarchy. In doing so, a space was created for women within the convent walls which had its own set of rules and societal norms. In this space elite women could create themselves as economically and socially powerful. The economic power gained by many convents in colonial society allowed them to resist and sometimes ignore patriarchal and ecclesiastical authority. By the end of the colonial period, convents began to experience a steady decline in their independence, power, and economic influence. The nuns were being forced, by the state and by the church, into a suppressed position in society more strictly under the control of ecclesiastical and patriarchal authority. The Concepción Convent of Cuenca experienced the same processes of prosperity and decline as the larger convents of Peru and Mexico and yet managed to survive. Although the convent is a poor institution today, it remains a symbol in the centre of the city of the power and influence once held by a community of women.

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