

‘Jesuits and “Race” in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia’s Letters to the King, 1604-1618’, in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022).

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Jesuits and ‘Race’ in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia’s Letters to the King, 1604-1618.¹

‘Race’, as we know, is a problematic concept; common contemporary categories of race (in particular, those considered ‘biological’ or ‘genetic’ or based on phenotype) become even more problematic when used as frameworks with which to study socio-religious structures, phenomena and groups in the early-modern period given the marked differences in meaning over time. We certainly run the risk of distorting historical realities if we seek to impose contemporary preoccupations, however important and justifiable, on earlier societies; yet, at the same time, current societal injustices perpetuated by discrimination and structural violence embedded in what society now perceives to be racial difference often have their roots in colonial hierarchies. As Peter Wade argues in his work *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, while it is one thing to be aware of the problem of ‘presentism’ or, ‘the judging of previous historical eras by the standards of our own’, to swing the pendulum too far the other way runs the risk of producing histories which are ‘rather divorced from [their] social context’.² Wade’s point, which acts as the theoretical starting point for this chapter, is that: ‘ideas about human difference, while they may have involved a concept of race that was diverse, contested and even not very central, were certainly powerfully structured by ideas of European superiority’.³

The purpose of the following chapter is to test the above statement with respect to the Society of Jesus in Colonial Hispanic America and, more specifically, on the war-torn frontier of Chile. To this end, this study analyses a series of letters written from Chile to the Spanish monarch Philip III (b.1578, r.1598-1621) or his representatives by the Jesuit priest (and also diplomat, crown agent and peace broker) Luis de Valdivia (b.1561-d.1642) from 1604 through to 1618.⁴ If the findings do not wholeheartedly endorse Wade’s statement to its furthest extent, they nonetheless add nuance to our understanding of ‘ideas about human difference’ amongst Jesuits in Hispanic America and highlight potential areas for further

¹ My thanks are due to Luke Clossey, Jack Leung, Charles Parker and Nathaniel Millet for their careful reading of previous drafts of this chapter and their helpful comments and suggestions.

² Critique of Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), in Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2010), p.6

³ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, p.8.

⁴ For Luis de Valdivia’s biographical details see Andrés Ignacio Prieto, ‘Valdivia, Luis de, SJ (1561-1642)’, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits*, ed. by Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.813.

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study. The chapter shall first introduce the socio-political context on the Chilean frontier, before moving to discuss the methodology used to analyse the letters. Once the letters have been analysed, the chapter will turn to the ideas of one of the most important Jesuit thinkers of the time, Valdivia’s close-contemporary, José de Acosta (b.1540, d.1600) for an explanation and contextualisation of the findings.

Context: Luis de Valdivia, Chile and the Defensive War

Luis de Valdivia was part of the first contingent of Jesuits to establish a mission in Chile in 1593 and, as a group, they cultivated close links with an important patron of the Society, Martín García Óñez de Loyola, the nephew of Ignatius Loyola, who was appointed governor of Chile in 1592. In 1598, however, Óñez de Loyola was killed at the start of a major uprising of Indigenous Mapuche which brought about the collapse of Spanish dominion in Araucanía, the stretch of territory south of the river Biobío, and the destruction of six of the principal Spanish towns of the colony—Valdivia, Villa Rica, La Imperial, Osorno, Angol, and Santa Cruz de Coya.⁵ The shock of this uprising and the speed with which Spanish authority collapsed provoked a bitter reaction from the secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries of the colonial capital, Santiago, who petitioned the king to allow the enslavement of the Indigenous Mapuche who had, as they saw it, rebelled against his authority. This intensive lobbying from those in favour of a continuation and escalation of the war was successful because, on 26 May 1608, notwithstanding papal prohibition, Philip III published a decree that permitted the enslavement of Indigenous males over the age of ten-and-a-half and Indigenous females over the age of nine-and-a-half by those who captured them in the course of the frontier war.⁶

Valdivia, then rector of the College of San Miguel (founded in 1595), also signed this petition to allow the enslavement of the Indigenous Mapuche who had rebelled against the king.⁷ Nevertheless, in 1602 he was recalled to Lima and there his Jesuit brothers persuaded him

⁵ Sergio Villalobos refers to Santa Cruz as “Santa Cruz de Óñez”: Villalobos, *La vida fronteriza en Chile* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992), p. 237. See also Alonso de Ovalle, *Histórica relación del Reino de Chile y de las misiones y ministerios que ejercita en él la Compañía de Jesús* [1646] (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2003), p.365. Rather than Osorno, Ovalle names Chillán as the one of the six destroyed cities.

⁶ Eugene Korth, *Spanish Policy in Colonial Chile: The Struggle for Social Justice, 1535-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p.111.

⁷ José Manuel Díaz Blanco, ed., *El Alma en la palabra: escritos inéditos del P. Luis de Valdivia* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado / Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2011), p.30. See also Andrew Redden, ‘The Best Laid Plans...: Jesuit Counsel, Peacebuilding, and Disaster on the Chilean Frontier; The Martyrs of Elicura, 1612’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 4 (2017), 250-69 (251-3).

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that the cause of the Mapuche insurgents was, in fact, just and he revised his opinion completely.⁸ While there, during the years 1604-5, he and his fellow Jesuits developed a proposal for a new colonial policy of 'defensive war' which was to withdraw troops to a line of forts along the river Biobío and to only engage in defensive military activity to defend the settlements of the Spanish and those Mapuche who had chosen to ally themselves with them. In the meantime, they could agree to terms with those who had rebelled and negotiate exchanges of captives. To keep the peace, Spanish incursions for the purpose of capturing slaves from enemy Mapuche populations would be forbidden. The plan won the approval of the outgoing viceroy of Peru, the Marquis of Salinas, Luis de Velasco (in office 1595/6-1604) and his successor the Count of Monterrey, Gaspar de Zúñiga Acevedo y Fonseca (in office 1603/4-1606) and, with the viceroy's approval, Valdivia travelled back to Chile to implement it.⁹ Such was the ferocity of resistance from both secular and ecclesiastical residents of Chile, however, that he returned to Lima in 1606, and then journeyed to Spain to seek the approval of Philip III and his Council of the Indies. The plan was even more controversial for Spanish settlers in Chile because it also sought to address one of the key causal factors of the uprising by calling for an end to obligatory forced labour for the Indigenous Mapuche (tantamount to slavery in all but name). Such a policy change threatened the very basis on which the colonial economy functioned and, as such, was unacceptable to those whose wealth depended on this exploitation of the Indigenous Mapuche.

Valdivia's campaign to implement this policy of defensive warfare (thereby ending the enslavement of the Indigenous Mapuche and removing their reasons to remain at war with the Spanish) had the backing of his superior, the provincial Diego de Torres Bollo. This approval was crucial to Valdivia obtaining the support of the superior general Claudio Acquaviva (b.1543, d.1615, in office 1581–1615) bearing in mind that engaging in political controversies and representing secular authorities contravened the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. These stated:

⁸ Díaz Blanco, *El alma en la palabra*, pp.31-2.

⁹ Luis de Velasco was named viceroy by Philip II (b.1527, r.1556-98) on 7 June 1595, but reached Lima and took office over a year later on 24 July 1596. He also served as the viceroy of New Spain, during the years 1589/90-95 and again in 1607-11. Gaspar de Zúñiga was named viceroy of Peru by Philip III on 19 May 1603 and entered Lima and took office on 28 November 1604. He died in office in 1606. Like his predecessor, Zúñiga also served as viceroy of New Spain immediately prior to his being named as viceroy of Peru (1595-1603), For biographical information about respective viceroys of Peru, see Manuel de Mendiburu, *Diccionario histórico-biográfico del Perú*, vols.1-8 (Lima: Imprenta de J. Francisco Solís, 1874-90) <<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obras/autor/mendiburu-manuel-de-1805-1885-6133>> [accessed, 18/01/21]. For Luis de Velasco and Gaspar de Zúñiga, see vol. 8, pp.285-94 and pp.383-85. The jointly addressed letter by Luis de Valdivia can be read as: 'Memorial a Luis de Velasco y el Conde de Monterrey, Lima 1604', in *El Alma en la palabra*, ed. by Díaz Blanco, pp.85-104.

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So that the Society may be able to devote itself more entirely to the spiritual pursuits pertaining to its profession, it should abstain as far as possible from all secular employments [...] through not accepting such burdens and not employing itself in them because of any requests.¹⁰

Acquaviva blocked Valdivia’s appointment as bishop of Concepción (which again contravened the *Constitutions*), but acquiesced when, in 1610, Valdivia was appointed crown representative with the authority to implement the policy of ‘defensive war’. This authority also extended to put into effect the peace treaty with the insurgent Mapuche, and Valdivia was simultaneously made ecclesiastical administrator (vicar general) of the diocese of Concepción until such time as a bishop could be named. Acquaviva even facilitated this appointment by naming Valdivia ‘the independent superior of the missions already established and those yet to be established south of the Biobío’.¹¹

Valdivia returned to Chile in 1611 and began to put into action the defensive war strategy. Despite having the support and authority of the king, Philip III, his Council, the viceroy of Peru, Juan de Mendoza y Luna, the Marquis of Montesclaros (b.1571, d.1628, in office 1607–15) and initially at least, the newly appointed governor Alonso de Ribera (b.1560, d.1617; in office 1612–17), reaction by Spanish colonists (both lay and ecclesiastical) was, as might be expected, extremely hostile, due to the economic dependence of the colony on the forced labour of the Indigenous Mapuche which the Jesuit strategy threatened.¹² Such were the terms of the defensive war that they were to be deprived of the only real source of wealth in the colony—indigenous labour.

In 1612, negotiations went awry and renewed fighting led to the killing of three Jesuits (two priests and one brother), numerous warriors and Mapuche leaders who had accepted the terms offered by Valdivia, and the enslavement of their wives and children by forces hostile to the Spanish.¹³ The defensive war strategy started to unravel and then hung on by a thread as the governor decided to back those opposed to it. Nevertheless, if Valdivia’s accounts are to be believed, notwithstanding the tragic setback, the policy was successful in that it brought an uneasy peace to the frontier that had not been experienced since the beginning

¹⁰ John Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), Part vi, no. 591, 258.

¹¹ Redden, ‘The Best Laid Plans...’, 253. See also Díaz Blanco, *El alma en la palabra*, pp.39-44. See also, Korth, *Spanish Policy in Colonial Chile*, pp.123-5.

¹² Valdivia specifically requested Ribera’s appointment.

¹³ Redden, ‘The Best Laid Plans...’, 263-7.

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of the uprising in 1598. There were still powerful interest groups (on both sides of the border), however, who continued to oppose this negotiated peace and time was not on Valdivia’s side.

The support given to Valdivia in his peace-brokering efforts by his superiors Torres Bollo and Acquaviva was not continued by their successors. Torres Bollo’s successor, Pedro de Oñate (d.1646; in office, 1615–24) vigorously opposed Valdivia’s continued political involvement and resented his unusual independence of action. Acquaviva’s successor, meanwhile, Muzio Vitelleschi (1563–1645; in office 1615–45) elected superior general after Acquaviva’s death in 1615, was keen to reinforce the Society’s conformity with the *Constitutions*. In 1621, attentive to the criticisms of Oñate in Paraguay, he withdrew the authority Valdivia had been given to act independently as an agent of the crown. Valdivia, who had returned to Spain the previous year, was dealt a further blow from which he never really recovered, when Vitelleschi ordered him to remain in Spain.¹⁴ This coincided with the death of Philip III and the coronation of his son Philip IV in 1621 who, receiving new counsel, decided in 1625 to reverse his father’s policy of supporting the strategy of defensive war. With the royal decree of 13 April 1625 ordering a return to an offensive strategy, Valdivia, sadly, saw his life’s work to bring peace to the Chilean frontier and prevent the enslavement of the Indigenous Mapuche, dismantled around him.

Sources and Methodology

What follows is an examination of thirteen letters or reports written by Luis de Valdivia over the course of fourteen years.¹⁵ The first to be analysed, was written in 1604 to the outgoing viceroy of Perú, the Marquis of Salinas, Luis de Velasco and the incoming viceroy, the Count of Monterrey, Gaspar de Zúñiga Acevedo y Fonseca. Another document, published in 1611, is a printed apologia for the policy of defensive warfare championed by Luis de Valdivia and the Jesuits in the provinces of Peru and Paraguay (which included Chile) and which, as

¹⁴ Díaz Blanco, *El alma en la palabra*, pp.43-44.

¹⁵ Contemporary copies of all the documents analysed can be found in various archives in Chile, Spain and Italy, particularly the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) in Rome, the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville, the Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile (ANH) and the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile (BNC) in Santiago de Chile. This chapter uses the transcripts compiled in the critical edition by José Manuel Díaz Blanco, ed., *El Alma en la palabra: escritos inéditos del P. Luis de Valdivia* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado / Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2011).

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mentioned above, was being severely criticised by numerous colonial interests in Chile.¹⁶ It was a lengthy point-by-point explanation of the Jesuit position and refutation of those who supported the return to a more aggressive campaign against the indigenous Mapuche who were fiercely resisting Spanish conquest. The remaining eleven letters, meanwhile, were reports penned by Valdivia to the king, delivering updates on the situation on the frontier and defending himself and the policy he was implementing from his many detractors.

The selection of letters gives particular insight into Jesuit typologies with respect to wider 'secular' society. Rather than being letters intended to be circulated internally (such as the 'edifying' and formulaic Annual Letters sent back to Rome by the superior of each province, which were then copied and circulated amongst Jesuit colleges to encourage novices and clergy), these are political polemics and descriptive reports (also formulaic, but in a different way to the Annual Letters) written to a non-ecclesiastical readership to explain a socio-political situation from a particular perspective. For the most part, the intended audience (the king and his council) is consistent across the body of letters, as even the two documents not directly written to the king (the 1604 letter to the viceroys and the printed polemical pamphlet of 1611) were meant to inform the ongoing debate at court. One might expect clear hierarchical stereotypes to emerge in such letters, given that the Spanish court and the Council of the Indies, who advised the monarch on matters relating to the Americas, were at the pinnacle of the colonial structures of the Spanish empire. Nevertheless, just these thirteen letters include a staggering number of human categories: 203 in total, mentioned 1401 times. Such a broad typological spectrum cannot help but shed light on the complexity of categorisation by Valdivia, a Jesuit with considerable authority in Chile and who was largely representative of a much broader political position.

The methodology uses a dual premise as its starting point. The first is that seeking to superimpose modern, primarily phenotypical racial hierarchies, on the reality of seventeenth-century Jesuits would be at best ahistorical and, at worst, a distortion of what was lived and understood at the time. The second part of the premise is a counterpoint to the first, which is that the Jesuits, in seeking to describe contemporary events with a particular salvific agenda, did nevertheless classify groups of people according to particular criteria. This dual premise allows us to ask to what extent (if at all) seventeenth century

¹⁶ Valdivia, Luis de, 'Impreso propagandístico de la guerra defensiva, Lima 1611', in *El Alma en la palabra*, pp.125-34.

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Spanish Jesuit thought and practice reflected exploitative colonial and discriminatory hierarchies. In order to address this question, the analysis in this chapter uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative element involved counting the total number of categories that Valdivia used to describe human groups and dividing them into related subgroups in order to permit statistical comparisons. The qualitative analysis involves a qualitative consideration of the context of specific categories the letters use to draw out Valdivia’s meaning and intentionality followed by contextualising Valdivia’s letters in a consideration of the universalism of the Catholic Church and the categorisation of the highly influential writings of Valdivia’s near-contemporary, José de Acosta.

As with all methodologies and short studies, this approach can only give us a partial picture and a number of important caveats should be borne in mind. The scope of this study is necessarily small and the chapter essentially is a micro-history—a close analysis of just thirteen letters written primarily to the king by one individual in a particular historical and socio-political context. The survey sample of thirteen documents is relatively small even though a temporal spread of fourteen years is covered, which does allow us to gauge slight changes over time. Questions might legitimately be raised as to how much can be extrapolated and how representative these documents are with respect to understanding early-modern, Jesuit, typological categorisations more generally. A key issue, for example, is that the particular context of these letters means that enslaved Africans and their descendants are almost completely absent from the documents; they refer almost exclusively to Indigenous Americans and Europeans.

No specialist software was used in the quantitative data collection and processing. I tried to be as consistent as possible in the selection process of what was a typological category and what was merely description—nouns were considered categories while nouns followed immediately by adjectives (descriptors) were sub-categories. Descriptions (that were not nouns immediately followed by adjectives) were not considered ‘categories’ per-se. Spelling variations of the same word (such as ‘*indio*’ vs ‘*yndio*’) were considered orthographical rather than typological differences and were therefore considered as the same categories. Nevertheless, variations that phrased similar types differently, such as ‘*nuevos amigos nuestros*’ (‘new friends of ours’), ‘*yndios amigos*’ (‘Indian friends’), ‘*yndios amigos de paz*’ (‘peaceful Indian friends’) have all been considered as different categories. Categories which say the same but distinguish gender, such as ‘*yndias de paz*’ (‘peaceful Indian

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The Quantitative Analysis

The thirteen documents studied here, written by Valdivia over a period of fourteen years, used a remarkable 203 categories to describe human typologies with a total frequency of 1401.¹⁷ 125 of those categories referred to Indigenous people (62%), while 64 referred specifically to Spaniards (31%). Only eight categories referred to neither Indigenous people nor Spaniards (4%), while a further six (3%) were non-specific and either referred to humankind in general or both Spaniards and Indigenous Mapuche (Figure 1).

Indigenous categories were mentioned 871 times (62%); Spanish categories, 485 (35%); non-Indigenous and non-Spanish 17 times (1%); while non-specific categories were used 28 times (2%). The frequency of use of Indigenous and Spanish categories matches the number of typological categories almost exactly (Figure 1). This is perhaps not surprising given the context of the letters which sought to inform the king and others of the situation on and beyond the frontier in order to shore up a policy that essentially tried to protect the Indigenous Mapuche from Spanish aggression and remove the causal factors for corresponding Mapuche aggression towards Spanish settlers. The protagonism of Indigenous people in these letters (whether as victims, perpetrators or allies) is highlighted by the number and frequency of use of Indigenous typological categories.

[Insert Figure 1 near here]

¹⁷ Total frequency refers to the amount of times categories were mentioned over the 13 letters.

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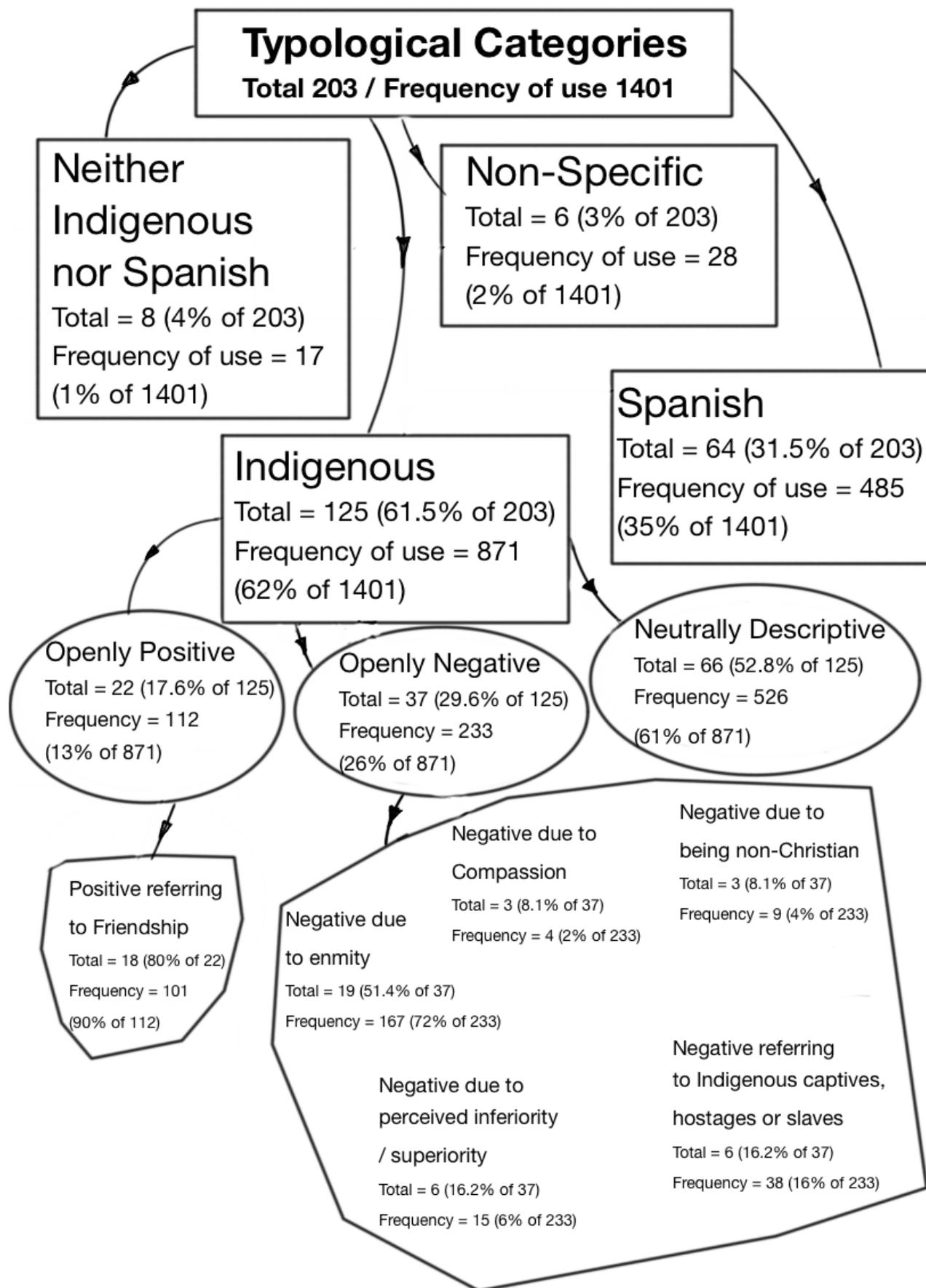


Figure 1: Typological Categories: Indigenous, Spanish, Neither, Non-Specific

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As mentioned above, people of African descent were almost entirely absent from these letters, only being mentioned twice in two categories. The category 'mulatto', referring to mixed Spanish and African parentage, was mentioned once in the letter of 1604 alongside 'mestizo', which referred to mixed Spanish and Indigenous parentage. In an attempt to persuade the outgoing and incoming viceroys of the unjust nature of the indigenous forced labour tribute, Valdivia proposed as a solution that indigenous labourers be remunerated, just as 'mestizos and mulattos were hired'.¹⁸ He continued, reasonably, 'he who treats them [his Indigenous workers] better will receive better service'.¹⁹ He used the category 'black' only once, in a letter to Philip III in 1614.²⁰ Valdivia was trying to persuade the king of the absolute necessity of continuing with the defensive war policy so that the peace could be kept in order to reduce the military forces on the frontier. In this way they would relieve the pressure on the Mapuche groups who were allied to the Spanish and sustained them:

And if this does not happen [...] the peaceful Indians that are in Concepción and those of Arauco and Catiray with the work that will fall on them to provision the troops and the forts, will either rise up and become restless again, and when those of Concepción do not rebel, they will die out and this kingdom will be finished, because it does not have [the resources] to bring blacks from outside.²¹

Even though his proposed solution was to keep the peace rather than import enslaved Africans, the argument he uses is an uncritical repetition of the Lascasian conundrum outlined below—that relief could only be granted to Indigenous labourers if it were replaced with that of enslaved peoples from elsewhere. By the time Valdivia was writing, however—a century after Bartolomé de las Casas considered this same possibility—there was no ambiguity about who would be the ones to be enslaved. Valdivia did not think to question the legitimacy of the institution of slavery as a whole or whether enslaved peoples might be other than African. Unfortunately, the only reason Valdivia did not consider this a viable alternative to Indigenous labour in Chile was because he thought that Spaniards there could not afford to purchase sufficient numbers to sustain the colony, rather than that it was morally abhorrent. Had the financial resources been there, the implication is that he would have accepted, even encouraged, the importation of enslaved Africans as a preferred option to the forced labour of Indigenous Mapuche. A hierarchy of exploitation is clearly evident

¹⁸ Luis de Valdivia, 'Memorial a Luis de Velasco y al Conde de Monterrey, Lima, 1604', in *El alma de la palabra*, p.96.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Valdivia, 'Carta a Felipe III, Concepción, 20 de Febrero de 1614', in *El alma de la palabra*, p.298.

²¹ Ibid. This and, unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations are by myself.

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here. Nevertheless, it is worth noting as a caveat the fact that Valdivia only mentioned this possibility once in a survey of thirteen documents over a fourteen year period. That it was one typological category out of 203 and mentioned only once out of a frequency of 1401 (statistically, 0.07%) would suggest that Africans, whether enslaved or not, and whether as a solution to the ongoing conflict or not, were far from his mind.

Returning to the Indigenous categories, of 125 categories for Indigenous people, 37 could be described as openly negative (29.6%); 22, openly positive (17.6%); and 66, neutrally descriptive (52.8%) (Figure 1). 'Positive', in this case, refers to inclusive categories that indicate alliance, friendship, or closeness to the Spanish, the Jesuits or their culture or cause. 'Negative' categories can be understood as indicating the opposite. Negative categories were used 233 times (26%); positive categories 112 times (13%); and neutrally descriptive categories 526 times (61%) (Figure 1). Once again, the total frequency of use of these categories appears to map closely onto the type of categories used.

Negative categories can be further subdivided into those which demonstrated Valdivia's compassion for the Indigenous Mapuche such as 'the sick', 'the wretched', 'the poor' (3 sub-categories: 8.1%); and those which demonstrated his perceived sense of superiority (6 sub-categories: 16.2%). Other negative sub-categories included those which referred in different ways to captives, hostages or Indigenous slaves: there were six of these categories (16.2%) all neutrally written without intended emotional or emotive meaning. Particularly shocking to modern sensibilities is the use of the category '*pieças*' which literally translates as 'pieces' or 'chattel' meaning 'slaves'. Valdivia, here, is using a term in common usage at the time that demonstrates the absolute conversion of people into objects to be bought, sold and disposed of at will. While there were laws governing the treatment of slaves, the term nonetheless highlights the stark reality of the trade.

It is important to note that in using this term Valdivia was not writing in support of the enslavement of people but rather describing what was happening as part of and which drove the conflict, as Spanish soldiers and settlers benefitted financially from capturing slaves and selling them on. The legal proclamations that facilitated the enslavement of Indigenous people who 'rebelled' against the king gave cover for slave raiding beyond the frontier.²²

²² The longer the conflict continued, transcending generations, the harder it became to talk in terms of a 'rebellion' as Spanish dominion did not reach the Mapuche with whom they were in conflict. This, of course, undermined the legal justification for the war and, ultimately, for Spanish rule.

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This, in turn, entrenched Indigenous hostility towards the Spanish and made peace-negotiations much more difficult.

There were also three ‘negative’, yet neutrally written, categories which referred to non-Christians (8.1%) and which were all variants on the term ‘pagan’²³; and, finally, the largest number of categories (19, or 51.4%), referred to Indigenous enemies of the Spanish (Figure 1).²⁴ Particularly telling of these negative categories is that only 16.2% could be said to be deliberately disparaging. This subset that demonstrated perceived Indigenous inferiority (or Spanish superiority) included the categorisations of Indigenous Mapuche as ‘barbarians’, ‘*chusma*’ meaning ‘riff-raff’, ‘*gandules*’ meaning ‘lazy-ones’, ‘useless old people’, ‘*ladroncillos*’ meaning ‘thieves’ and ‘*soldadillos*’ referring to young warriors’. Even this subset should be placed in context, however, as they appear in Valdivia’s letters to the king from 1612 through to 1618 as part of a discourse to demonstrate how effective the defensive war policy had been, and how the threat from the Indigenous Mapuche south of the Biobío had largely ceased to exist. All that remained of the threat were ‘*viejos inútiles*’ (‘useless old people), ‘*ladroncillos*’ (‘little thieves’), and *soldadillos* (‘little soldiers’). Valdivia’s use of the diminutive ‘*cillo / illo*’ appears patronizing but is intended to persuade the king that the young Mapuche warriors, keen to enhance their reputation by raiding Spanish territory and stealing livestock, goods and even taking slaves, were not worth worrying about. They could be easily controlled by punitive raids carried out by soldiers from the nearest fort and their Indigenous allies. As such, the defensive war strategy should be continued as it had brought (relative) peace to the frontier.

These deliberately disparaging categories were also used with relative infrequency. Their total frequency of use across the 13 documents was 15 (only 6%). By comparison, the ‘negative due to compassion’ categories had the smallest total frequency of 4 (2%); the negative categories referring to captivity or enslavement, 38 (16%); the negative due to being non-Christian, 9 (4%); and the negative due to enmity, 167 (72%) (Figure 1). The vast majority of Valdivia’s use of negative categories to describe Indigenous people used the observable fact of opposition to demonstrate difference rather than perceived inferiority and superiority. These categories tended to be neutrally written and included types such as ‘our

²³ The literal translation of the word ‘*infieles*’ would be ‘infidel’ or more literally ‘unfaithful’. In this context it means ‘un-baptised’ or ‘pagan’.

²⁴ Negative, yet neutrally written, means categories that ‘other’ the Indigenous person or group and separate them from the Spanish, but not in a disparaging way.

'Jesuits and "Race" in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia's Letters to the King, 1604-1618', in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022). enemies', 'restless warriors', 'people at war' (*gente de guerra*), 'those who want war', 'Indians at war', 'Indians who have retreated [from the border]' etc. Worthy of note is the appearance in the last two letters (1617 and 1618) of two variations of this latter category, '*retirados*' ('[those who have] retreated') and '*yndios retirados*' ('Indians [who have] retreated'). In the letter of April 1617, '*retirados*' is used twice, while in the letter of January 1618, the term '*retirados*' is used seventeen times, and '*yndios retirados*', once.²⁵ Prior to 1617, the term is not used at all and is indicative of a new phenomenon in the course of the war—that of Indigenous Mapuche relocating as far south of the border as they could so as to remove themselves entirely from the threat of Spanish raids or, indeed, Spanish missionaries. Notwithstanding the fact that to this point the 'defensive war' strategy was maintaining the peace, those who retreated not surprisingly wanted nothing whatsoever to do with the Spanish and remained deeply suspicious even of the Jesuits who were largely responsible for the negotiations and acted as mediators. Of course, this numerical observation does not say anything about the social impact of these migrations and, indeed, may be more a reflection of Valdivia's recent awareness of and growing preoccupation with the phenomenon. Nevertheless, it does suggest a shift in the Mapuche response to the Spanish and this numerical indication is one that might usefully be followed up with more research.

So far, we have dealt primarily with openly 'negative' categories for Indigenous people used by Valdivia. These might be compared with the openly 'positive' categories he also uses. The total frequency of 'negative due to being non-Christian' categories (9), for example, compares exactly with the total frequency of 'positive due to being Christian' (also 9). The category of '*almas*' or 'souls' (6 out of the total of 9) has been included in this 'positive' set as it is indicative of the Catholic belief in the universality of humankind. The fact that two thirds of the frequency of these 'Christian' categories simply refers to Indigenous people as 'souls' speaks volumes about Jesuit priorities and the way they perceived humanity. The total frequency of 'negative categories of enmity' (167 or 62% of the combined frequency of enmity vs friendship categories), meanwhile, exceeds the total frequency of 'positive categories indicating friendship or alliance' (101 or 38%) by about a third (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2 near here].

²⁵ Luis de Valdivia, 'Carta a Felipe III, Concepción, 12 de Abril de 1617' and 'Carta a Felipe III, Concepción 31 de Enero de 1618', in *El alma en la palabra*, pp.396-402 and 405-414.

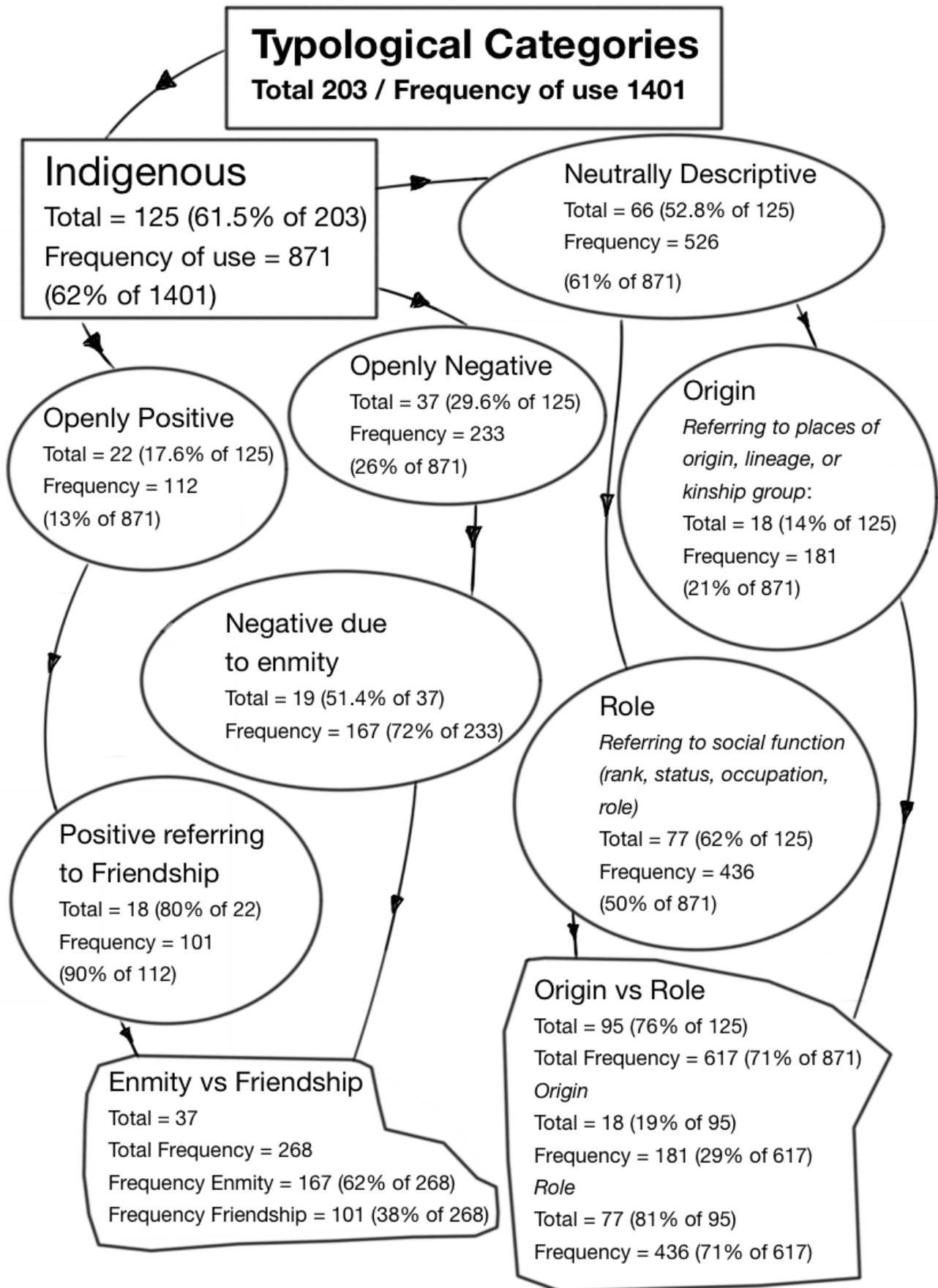


Figure 2: Enmity vs Friendship and Origin vs Role

By far, however, the most important set of categories of Indigenous people is that which is neutrally descriptive which, as mentioned above, covered 52.8% of all the categories used with a total frequency of 61% (see Figures 1 and 2). This set can be further divided into those categories which referred to the Indigenous groups' (or person's) places of origin or lineage (i.e. where they were from, or their kinship group) and those which referred to social function (including rank or status) (i.e. what they did, whether they were at war, or at peace, whether they had a profession—essentially what their role was in society). The former set included 18 different categories mentioned with a total frequency of 181, while the latter included 77 categories mentioned with a total frequency of 436 (see Figure 2):

As we can see, the importance of categories indicating role or social function cannot be understated. Of the total number of indigenous categories (125) mentioned with a total frequency of 871, 77 referred to role or social function, mentioned with a total frequency of 436. This equates to 62% of all Indigenous categories referring to role or social function with a total frequency of 50%.

'Social function' itself can be subdivided into various classificatory types that appeared in the letters. 16 categories referred to societal rank and were mentioned a total of 86 times. 18 categories referred to family status (e.g. brother, daughter, son, children, wives etc) and was mentioned with a similar frequency of 84.²⁶ 23 categories referred to (non-military) occupation (things people did, rather than who they were) with a frequency of 117.²⁷ Not surprisingly, by far the biggest set (with some overlap with the previous categories of rank) was those that referred to military occupation with 43 categories and a total frequency of 289 (Figure 3).²⁸ Both the number of categories and frequency of mention correlate relatively closely and what is worthy of note is the clear predominance given to categories that denote occupation (whether military or otherwise): 66% number; 70% frequency.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

²⁶ These categories also include those that refer to age such as '*viejos*' (old people) or '*moços*' or '*muchachos*', meaning youths

²⁷ It should be noted that there is some overlap here as the four categories of '*cacique*' or community leader were indicative of social status but also referred to what people did.

²⁸ 33 categories overlap here between military occupation and societal rank which creates a discrepancy between the total number (77) of social function categories (Figure 2) and the number (100) of social function categories when they are subdivided (Figure 3).

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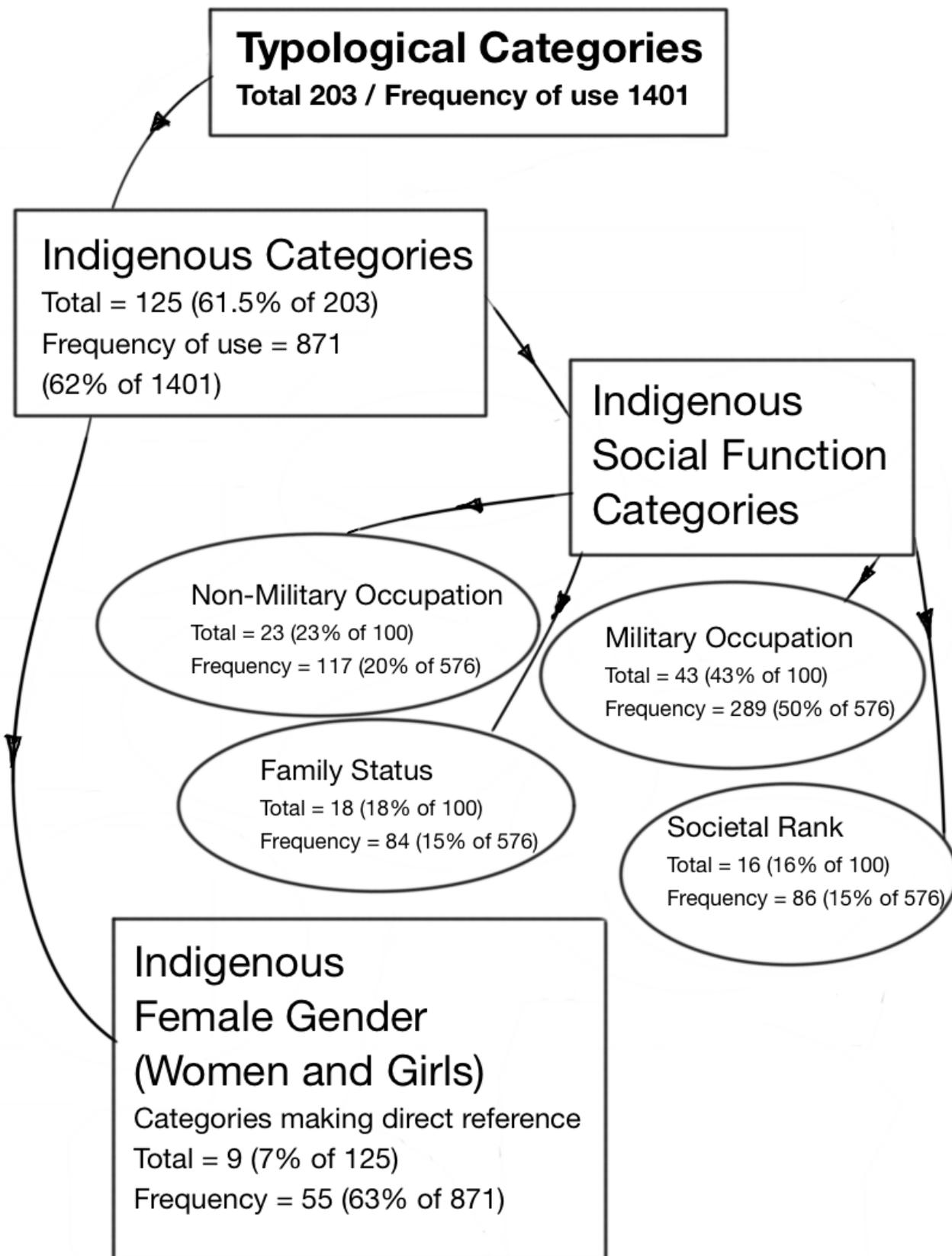


Figure 3: Indigenous Social Function and Gender

'Jesuits and "Race" in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia's Letters to the King, 1604-1618', in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022).

The final typological set to be mentioned here (although there are more) is that of gender. Given the gendered nature of the Spanish language and also the gendered nature of war, only a minority of categories referred specifically to the female gender (whether Indigenous or Spanish). Nevertheless, women were profoundly affected by the frontier war as they were the frequent victims of slave raids by both sides and, even though women are not Valdivia's prime focus (as might be expected from a celibate priest reporting on war), they do appear in the documentary record. Nine out of 125 categories for Indigenous people (7%) referred specifically to women with a total frequency of 55 out of 871, again showing a close correlation between number and frequency (Figure 3).

Summary of Findings

From this quantitative analysis of typological categories used by Valdivia we can draw out three key findings. The first is that in these letters written over a period of fourteen years we see so many categories used with such frequency that in the messy reality of a conflict-riven frontier such as Chile in the early-seventeenth century, the concept of 'race' becomes relatively meaningless. Rather than helping us to better understand the complexities of colonial society or Jesuit thought and practices, arguably, it serves more to distract our attention from what contemporary society considered important in terms of the way it was structured and the injustices and conflicts that resulted. The fact that Valdivia did not use the collective term 'race' (*raza*) (or an equivalent synonym) once across the survey of thirteen documents over fourteen years serves to reinforce this finding.

The second key finding is that the majority of categories or sub-categories referring to indigenous people, both in number and frequency, were neutrally descriptive and did not (openly at least) express sentiments of European superiority. Those categories that did were relatively few in number and were used specifically as part of a discourse to persuade the king that the Indigenous people they referred to were not worth concerning himself with and that he should continue his policy of defensive warfare that (according to Valdivia) had been so effective at bringing about peace on the frontier.

The third finding is that the majority of typological categories and sub-categories used by Valdivia were based on various types of social function. Even the largest set of categories

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that marked difference between peoples was based on a dualistic opposition—enmity versus friendship—and was not explicitly dependent on vertical hierarchy for its criteria.

Nevertheless, these broad findings based on quantitative analysis certainly need to be qualified by the contemporary social circumstances mentioned at the beginning of this chapter together with a consideration of the ideological underpinnings of Jesuit thought at the time. The social context of Chile—a colonial society, established by conquest and sustained by the exploited labour of particular groups of largely Indigenous people—was overtly (and often brutally) hierarchical. Even if typological categories for the most part depended on social function, one’s social function frequently determined one’s status in the colonial hierarchy (and vice-versa). Accident of birth (at the root of more modern racialised categorisations) certainly played a significant role in determining one’s function and status within this society. The Society of Jesus, itself an hierarchical institution, also existed within these parameters and Jesuits like Valdivia had to make sense of the world accordingly.

The following section considers the writings of the Jesuit intellectual and missionary José de Acosta (b.1540, d.1600), a near contemporary of Valdivia’s. Acosta was one of the most influential Jesuit thinkers of the time and left a tremendous imprint on the Jesuit missions in Spanish America, both through his leadership in the reform of evangelisation after the Council of Trent (1545-63) and its implementation in the Viceroyalty of Peru with the Third Council of Lima (1582-3) as well as his wide-ranging studies of the world he encountered. These works, in which he tried to make sense of the diversity of world and its human population within the intellectual bounds of his own hierarchical world-view, became the points of reference for generations of Jesuit missionaries in the early modern period and provided important intellectual background for the writings of Valdivia in Chile. What will become clear in the following analysis, however, is his salvific rather than racialised framework for structuring human hierarchy within the ‘natural order’.

The Salvific Ethnology of José de Acosta

By the seventeenth century, the Society of Jesus had become an integral part of Catholic European colonial enterprises both utilising and being used by colonial powers (particularly Spain, Portugal and France) to further particular interests. While these interests were not shared in their entirety (for example, the frequent disagreements between Jesuits and

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colonial officials and settlers with respect to the level and nature of exploitation of Indigenous labour), they were at least closely aligned (for example, with respect to belief in the dual necessity of the Christianisation of Indigenous Americans and their integration as subjects of Christian monarchs). During this same period in the Spanish global empire, Jesuit missions and missionaries became an important strategic element in the pacification and incorporation of Indigenous groups who openly resisted direct colonization on the frontiers of the Spanish viceroyalties. It is true that many Jesuits (with varying degrees of success and failure) tried to defend Indigenous American peoples and African slaves (or those descended from them) from some of the worst excesses of colonial exaction and abuse but, as a rule, even the most ardent Jesuit defenders of these people did not question the legitimacy of the transatlantic slave trade or of colonial projects more generally. What is more, the Jesuit mission networks, which frequently became the envy of colonists for their efficiency and shared productive capacity, relied heavily on slave labour in the coastal areas of the Andean region (what is now Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru) and on that of their Indigenous neophytes in other frontier regions such as Paraguay and northern Mexico.²⁹

In the meantime, Jesuits keen to evangelize newly trafficked slaves in the ports of Cartagena and Callao and the key urban centres used their own slaves as interpreters to mediate between the missionaries and the people from diverse ethno-linguistic groups from West Africa who had been violently sequestered and forcibly transported to the Americas. Two prominent examples were the Jesuits Alonso de Sandoval (b.1576, d.1652) and Pedro Claver, (b.1580, d.1654) who Sandoval mentored. Both ministered to African slaves in the Caribbean port of Cartagena, the entry point to thousands of enslaved peoples forcibly transported to the Americas from West Africa during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.³⁰ Sandoval’s contemporary, José de Acosta, had, in his blueprint for missionary evangelisation, *De procuranda Indorum salute* [1576], vehemently criticised those missionaries who attempted to minister to Indigenous Americans without learning their

²⁹ See for example, Jaime Torres Sánchez, *Haciendas y posesiones de la Compañía de Jesús en Venezuela: el Colegio de Caracas en el Siglo XVIII* (Sevilla: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 2001). See particularly, pp.103-32.

³⁰ Estimates provided by the *Slave Voyages Database* suggest that between the years 1526 and 1825, 167,987 captives were embarked for the Spanish circum-Caribbean, of which the principal port was Cartagena, while 119,153 were disembarked. During the first quarter of the seventeenth-century, which is the period this chapter is primarily concerned with, 75,564 captives were embarked while 52,892 were disembarked, <<https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>> [accessed, 18/01/2021]. Even factoring in smuggling which would reduce the numbers officially registered as ‘disembarked’ the difference of 22,672 is testament to the horror and sheer waste of life of the transatlantic slave trade.

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languages to a high level.³¹ Notwithstanding this criticism, and despite the fact that Sandoval used Acosta's work as a model for his own, he recognised the logistical impossibility of so few missionaries being able to learn so many and such linguistically diverse languages to a high enough standard. As such, he suggested that slaves owned and trained by the Jesuits be used as interpreters for catechesis and sacramental confession.³² Sandoval's assistant, Pedro Claver, (canonised in 1888 for his life's ministry to enslaved Africans), also used slaves as interpreters, having learned this methodology from his mentor, even when called on to act as an interpreter for trials of Africans accused of witchcraft.³³ While both laboured to improve the conditions of the captives they ministered to and were critical of the condition under which slaves were forcibly transported, neither condemned the institution of slavery itself, and Sandoval effectively limited himself to making recommendations to slave-owners as to the way they treated their slaves, that they should 'be few [in number]' and that the slaveholders should 'give them a good example'.³⁴

If Jesuits did not question and even participated in the construction of hierarchical, colonial structures, that hierarchy nevertheless did not map seamlessly onto what we would understand as modern racialized typologies. The key to understanding this dissonance is the firm belief of early modern Catholics in a common origin for humankind. All humans were believed to be descended from Adam and Eve and, post-Flood, the lineage of Noah as recounted in the Book of Genesis. All humans, therefore, were made in the likeness of God. As Colin Kidd points out, this 'unity of the human race was fundamental to Christian theology. If mankind did not spring from a single racial origin, then theologians were confronted with a scenario that undermined the very essence of the Christian story.'³⁵ He continues:

³¹ José de Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute [1576]: Educación y Evangelización*, ed. by Luciano Pereña (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984), pp.47-83. For other editions see Book 4, chapters 6-9.

³² Margaret Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation in Colonial Cartagena de Indias* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), pp.68-70. For Sandoval's work see: Alonso de Sandoval, *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute: Historia de Aethiopia, naturaleça, policia sagrada y profana, costumbres ritos y cathecismo evangélico de todos los Aethopes con que se restaura la salud de sus almas* (Madrid: Alonso de Paredes, 1647). This was first published in 1627 in Seville.

³³ Despite the fact that the Society of Jesus had an uneasy relationship with the Inquisition, Jesuits did act as theological advisers (such as José de Acosta) and interpreters (such as Pedro Claver). A request such as this could not easily be turned down even if those called on had wanted to. For an analysis of Claver's role in the witchcraft trials, see Andrew Redden, 'The Problem of Witchcraft, Slavery and Jesuits in Seventeenth-century New Granada', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 90:2 (2013), 223-50.

³⁴ Sandoval, *De Instauranda*, part 1, book 1, chapter 26, p.114. See Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation* for an in-depth discussion of Sandoval's position.

³⁵ Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.25.

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The sacred drama of Fall and redemption rests upon assumptions of mankind’s common descent from Adam. Otherwise, the transmission of original sin from Adam would not have polluted the whole human race. In the second place, Christ’s atonement – however limited the scope for election – would not apply to the whole of mankind.³⁶

This universalism was as true for the Catholic world as it was for the Protestant. Shortly after the conquest of the Caribbean Islands, as a result of the demographic collapse caused by widespread abuse of the Indigenous islanders by colonists, theologians, intellectuals and members of the colonial elite grappled with each other in protracted debates about the very nature of Indigenous American peoples. The outcome of these debates—the most famous being that between the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas (d.1566) and the secular cleric and humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (d.1573) in the mid-sixteenth century—would determine whether and to what extent Indigenous Americans could legitimately (according to the laws of the time) be enslaved for the benefit of Spanish colonists.³⁷ Broadly speaking, the strength and vigour of the Spanish church’s defence of Indigenous Americans (which, sadly, was never replicated with respect to enslaved Africans), was affirmed by the papal bull of Pope Paul III (r.1534-49), *Sublimis Deus* in 1537.³⁸ The bull condemned as diabolical

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The historiography on Las Casas and what became known as the Great Debate is wide-ranging but key works might include: Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apología o declaración y defensa universal de los derechos del hombre y de los pueblos* [1551], ed by Vidal Abril Castelló (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 2000); Bartolomé de las Casas, *De Regia Potestate: o derecho de autodeterminación* [1559/1571] edited by Luciano Pereña et al. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984); Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Apología Ioannis Genesii Sepulvedae Cordubensis pro libro De iustis bellis causis* (Rome: S.P., 1550); Lawrence Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Lewis Hanke, *Bartolomé de las Casas: An Interpretation of His Life and Writings* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1951). For an analysis of the debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda see: Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.27-148. See also David Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State: 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.79-101.

³⁸ The bull is sometimes incorrectly referred to as *Sublimis Dei* and other variations. Cited in Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas*, p.102 and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. by Robert Barr (New York: Orbis, 1993), p.324. The content of *Sublimis Dei* is confirmed by the Bull *Veritas Ipsa*, ‘Indos in Servitutum Redigere Prohibetur’ [‘Prohibition of the Enslavement of Indians’] issued on 2 June 1537. The full text of *Veritas Ipsa* can be found in Josef Metzler, ed. *America Pontificia: Primi Saeculi Evangelizationis 1493-1592*, vol.1 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), pp.364-66. In 1516, Las Casas infamously proposed the importation of slaves ‘blacks or other slaves’ as a substitute and solution to the need for Indigenous labour. An important and often forgotten nuance, highlighted by these authors, is that he was not proposing the massive, systematic and genocidal institution directed against African peoples that the transatlantic slave trade became. Rather, he was referring to the already existing institution whereby relatively small numbers of people had been enslaved regardless of ‘race’ or skin-colour. By the mid sixteenth-century he had regretted this so-called ‘solution’ and wrote to condemn the traffic of enslaved peoples more broadly. C.f. Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, pp.326-30. One other polemicist in the late-seventeenth century who stood out for his condemnation of the institution of the transatlantic slave trade was the Capuchin friar, Francisco José Jaca de Aragón (b.c.1645, d.c.1689). C.f. Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, p.323; Miguel Anxo Peña González, ‘Francisco José de Jaca, primer antiesclavista de la historia’, *Rolde: Revista de cultura aragonesa*, 116 (2006), 4-15.

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the arguments of those who maintained that Indigenous Americans were less than human in order to justify their enslavement. The reason for this outspoken condemnation was the implication that if they were subhuman, they were thereby not capable of receiving God’s grace or salvation:

Seeing and envying this, the enemy of mankind, who always opposes good men so that they might perish, devised a means, unheard of up to this time, by which the preaching of God’s word to nations for their salvation would be prevented. And he inspired certain of his satellites who, in their desire to satisfy their greed, presume to assert here and there that the Indians of the south and west, and other nations who in these times have come to our knowledge, under the pretext that they are incapable of the Catholic faith, are brute animals who can be enslaved by us.³⁹

The crucial statement that outlined the practical implications of this condemnation followed shortly after:

We command that the aforesaid Indians and all other nations which come to the knowledge of Christians in the future, must not be deprived of their freedom and the ownership of their property, even though they are outside the faith of Christ. Rather, they can use, increase, and enjoy this freedom and ownership freely and lawfully. They must not be enslaved. Furthermore, whatever else may be done, contrary to this command, shall be invalid and void.⁴⁰

This universalism (and prohibition of the enslavement of Indigenous Americans) as underlined by Paul III was reiterated in April 1639 by Urban VIII in his Bull *Commissum Nobis*, which stated:

No-one dare or presume to reduce the Indians to slavery, sell them, purchase them, exchange them or give them away, separate them from their wives and children, despoil them of their belongings and goods, move them to other places and displace them, or deprive them of their freedom in any manner whatsoever.⁴¹

³⁹ Pope Paul III, ‘Sublimus Deus: On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians, 29 May 1537’, cited in Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, translated by Stafford Poole (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp.100-101.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.101.

⁴¹ Cited in, Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, pp.311–12. A contemporary (seventeenth-century) translation into Portuguese of the bull, has been reprinted in: Serafim Leite, ‘Apêndice B: Breve do Papa Urbano VIII, <<Commissum Nobis>>, de 22 de Abril de 1639, sobre a Liberdade dos Índios da América’, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, vol VI (Lisboa: Livraria Portugália, 1945), pp.569-71. The excerpt reads: ‘[...] daqui por diante não ouzem ou presumaõ cativar os sobredittos Indios, vendellos, compralos, trocarlos, dalos, apartalos de suas molheres e filhos, privalos de seus bens, e fazenda, levalos e mandalos para outros lugares, privalos de qualquer modo da liberdade [...]’ (p.570).

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If any were to disobey this very clear proclamation and continue to participate in slaving expeditions against Indigenous Americans then the slaveholders were to be excommunicated.⁴² The former prohibition of the enslavement of Indigenous Americans caused riots in São Paulo, during which the Jesuit College was attacked. The *Paulistas*, whose wealth relied on regular slave expeditions that frequently attacked the Paraguayan missions, (rightly) considered the Jesuits responsible for either their excommunication or their loss of wealth.⁴³

All this fed into the Catholic universalism of the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ignatius Loyola's maxim, '*Ite, inflammate omnia*', meaning 'Go and set the world aflame!' aptly summarised the evangelical mission of the Society of Jesus. The gospel should be carried to all peoples of the world just as Christ had commanded.⁴⁴ Yet this mission did not mean that colonial hierarchies should be necessarily questioned, especially if these hierarchies were perceived to facilitate evangelisation. It was when colonial exploitation by Europeans who identified as Christian drove non-Christians or neophyte Christians to reject the Catholic Church and its teachings, or made it difficult to administer the sacraments to those they had Christianised, that the Jesuit position diverged markedly from that of the colonial settlers. Such was the case of Jesuits like Luis de Valdivia, as we have seen, who were tasked with evangelization on the Chilean frontier. Their mission was to save souls, and this was nigh impossible to do if the communities that they wished to evangelize were in a state of war with the Spanish. For the most part, however, the Society was keen to maintain good relations with colonists, bearing in mind of course that Jesuits also ministered to them in the urban settlements, received financial support from them, taught their sons in schools and colleges, ministered to their wives and daughters, and recruited new members from their population. Just like the vast majority of colonists, they were also loyal subjects of the Spanish monarch who defended the Catholic faith at the head of a vast global empire. This was a hierarchical society that, in its ideal form, affirmed and

⁴² '[...] com pena de excomunhaõ *latae sententiae* que se incorra *eo ipso* pellos Transgressores da qual não possaõ ser absolutos senaõ por nos ou pello Romano Pontifice que entaõ for salvo estando em artigo de morte'. ('Transgressors will automatically incur the penalty of excommunication after which they cannot be absolved if not by us or by the Roman Pontifice of the moment excepting when they are about to die'). Leite, 'Apêndice B: Breve do Papa Urbano VIII', p.570.

⁴³ See Andrew Redden, 'Priestly Violence, Martyrdom and Jesuits: The Case of Diego de Alfaro', in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. by Robert Maryks (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2016), pp.83-84 and 90. See also Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, vol VI, pp.253-55.

⁴⁴ 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', Matt. 28:19.

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defended the same cosmovision of the Society of Jesus which, in turn, taught that cosmovision to the people to whom it evangelised and ministered.

In order to teach this, however, it was necessary to try to understand more about the people they encountered. The paradox was that for this understanding to be coherent to the Jesuits (and Christian Europeans), it needed to fit within the universalist cosmovision that taught that all humans had descended from the progeny of Adam and Eve and then, subsequently, Noah. Indigenous American understanding of human origins therefore had to be documented and either contested or reworked. Origin stories such as the emergence and migration of the Toltec ancestors of the Central-Mesoamerican Nahua peoples from *Chicomotzoc* or ‘the place of the seven caves’, or the Inca descent from the Ayar siblings who emerged from a cave by the shores of Lake Titicaca (while other Andean ethnic groups emerged from different caves) flew in the face of scriptural accounts of the common ancestry of humankind.⁴⁵ Indigenous typological differences had to be recategorized so that they could fit the dominant Judeo-Christian narrative. As mentioned above, one of the most influential Jesuit writers and missionaries to set out to do this was José de Acosta (b.1540, d.1600), provincial superior of the Province of Peru between the years 1576-81 and theological advisor to the Third Council of Lima (1582-83). Acosta was also responsible for drafting and overseeing the printing of approved trilingual catechisms and book of sermons in Spanish, Quechua and Aymara, which were then used as a basis for subsequent translations for use in other regions of Spanish America, including Chile and the works in Mapundungun written by Luis de Valdivia.⁴⁶ These sermons and catechisms, designed to teach indigenous peoples the fundamentals of the Catholic faith, did so by breaking down the

⁴⁵ For *Chicomotzoc* see the manuscript illustration in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, fol.29. The manuscript is held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Département des Manuscrits, Mexicain 46-58 Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca), but the illustration is widely available online. See for example, ‘Historia Tolteca Chichimeca, Chicomoztoc [1545-1565]’, *Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America*, <<https://vistasgallery.ace.fordham.edu/exhibits/show/otherworldly-visions/item/1738>> [accessed, 12/01/21]. For the Ayar siblings (albeit not mentioned by this name) see Juan de Betanzos, *Suma y narración de los Incas [1542]* ed. by María del Carmen Martín Rubio (Madrid: Ediciones Polifermo, 2004), p.53. For different editions, the narration can be found in chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Luis de Valdivia’s own grammar of Mapundungun (written to enable other missionaries to be able to minister to the Indigenous Mapuche in Chile and first published in 1606) contained a guide to hearing confession and catechism. He followed this with a book of nine sermons in Mapundungun to facilitate preaching the Christian faith. Both these works were based on the model developed by Acosta as part of his contribution to the Third Council of Lima. See: Luis de Valdivia, *Arte y gramática general de la lengua que corre en todo el Reyno de Chile, con un vocabulario, y un confessorio [...] Juntamente con la Doctrina Christiana, y catechism del Concilio de Lima en español, y dos traduciones del en la lengua de Chile* (Lima: Francisco del Canto, 1606); See also, Luis de Valdivia, *Sermon en lengua de Chile, de los misterios de nuestra santa fe catholica, para predicarla a los indios infieles del Reyno de Chile, dividido en nueve partes pequeñas acomodadas a su capacidad* (Valladolid: S.P., 1621).

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Judeo-Christian (and then Catholic) cosmovision into digestible and chronological parts. It did not make sense to begin with a Christological narrative that talked about Christ’s salvific mission, rather it was imperative to explain first the common origins of humanity and the reasons why Christ’s salvation was necessary.⁴⁷ To this end, it was necessary to challenge absolutely the Indigenous origin histories that separated human lineages from each other and which recounted that humans had emerged spontaneously from different locations in the sacred earth or were fashioned by deities from ground maize-corn or other materials.⁴⁸ The universal narrative of Christianity required that the Indigenous histories of the universe be reconstructed from the very beginning; it was necessary to replace their entire hierarchies of being. As such, the structure of the catechism and thematic progression of the sermons began with the creation of the universe (the Genesis story), followed by the creation of spiritual beings (the angels), and then the fall of Lucifer and his fellow rebel angels. It then moved to the creation of the earth, animal and plant life and then the creation of humankind via the fashioning of Adam and Eve. The next stage was to establish Adam and Eve’s fall from grace and the beginning of Original Sin.⁴⁹ That was followed by the story of Noah and the common lineage of humankind (in all its sinfulness) which contextualised the coming of Christ and his salvific mission. From the perspective of Acosta and other Catholic missionaries, anthropological typology and hierarchies of difference began with the creation of the universe itself starting with God, the hierarchies of the angels and, subsequently, humankind, with its own internal hierarchies mirroring the celestial order.⁵⁰

If this cosmological hierarchy was directed pedagogically towards Indigenous Americans within the Hispanic empire, Acosta also laboured to understand how Indigenous Americans

⁴⁷ Eduardo Valenzuela Avaca refers to the theological term *kerygma* meaning ‘proclamation’ to refer to this first stage of Evangelization and argues that ‘everything that is proclaimed in the *kerygma* has the goal of substituting previous realities [for new ones]’. Eduardo Valenzuela Avaca, ‘Los ángeles caídos en el nuevo mundo: universalismo y demonología en la conquista ontológica de los cultos americanos (siglo XVI)’, PhD Thesis: Universidad de Chile, Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades, 2016, p.7. For a full explanation of the term and concept of *kerygma* see pp.23-40.

⁴⁸ The K’iché Mayan tradition is that their ancestors were created from paste made from maize ground by the immortal grandmother Xmucane on the instructions of the deity Sovereign Plumed Serpent. Once she had ground the maize nine times, the god fashioned it and breathed life into it with an incantation. See Dennis Tedlock, trans. and ed., *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp.145-6.

⁴⁹ Concilio Provincial, *Doctrina Christiana y catecismo para instruccion de los Indios, y de las demas personas que han de ser enseñadas en nuestra santa Fe con vn confesionario, y otras cosas necesarias para los que doctrinan, [...]* (Ciudad de los Reyes: Antonio Ricardo, 1584). See the facsimile edition by Luciano Pereña (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1985).

⁵⁰ See Ramón Mujica Pinilla, ‘Angels and Demons in the Conquest of Peru’, in *Angels, Demons and the New World*, edited by Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.179-85).

‘Jesuits and “Race” in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia’s Letters to the King, 1604-1618’, in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022).

fitted within the hierarchy of human and material creation in order to present this to interested European readers. Both these facets of his work written for difference audiences combined his understanding of human monogeneity in a single overarching worldview. With respect to his European readers, his seminal work, the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, which became the model for subsequent natural history surveys, surveyed the geography, flora and fauna of the Americas as well as recounting and reworking the histories of the Aztec hegemony of Central Mesoamerica Nahua and the Inca Empire of the South American Andes.⁵¹ His first task was to counter the arguments of classical and early Christian philosophers whose arguments about the Antipodes (as they referred to what they imagined the Americas to be) were necessarily speculative and wildly inaccurate. These early philosophers argued that the Antipodes—or New World as Acosta referred to them—either did not exist or, if their existence was accepted, were fundamentally different from the Old World (for example, that they had a different sky).⁵² By extension, Acosta was concerned to argue against any notion of difference of the inhabitants of the Antipodean New World (for example, that they were somehow monstrous or less than human).⁵³

If the basic premise was that all humankind was descended from Noah’s lineage, the next task was to work out how it was that his descendants had reached the Americas and populated it, bearing in mind that Noah’s ark was believed to have come to rest on Mount Ararat on the borderlands of what is now the eastern Anatolian region of Turkey, Armenia and Iran. He categorically discounted: ‘that there was another ark of Noah that brought men to the Indies; and [it was] even less likely that the first inhabitants of this [New] world might have been brought by some Angel dragging them by their hair like the prophet Habakkuk’.⁵⁴ Importantly, he does not try to deny God’s power to do have brought humans over to the Americas supernaturally, but nonetheless argues for a natural explanation, ‘rather, [one

⁵¹ José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (Sevilla: casa de Iuan de Leon, 1590). See the facsimile edition edited by Antonio Quilis (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultural Hispánica, 1998). For a study of Acosta’s work as a ‘programme for comparative ethnology’, see Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, pp.146-97. The structure of Sandoval’s *De Instauranda* was based on Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral*.

⁵² The very name ‘Antipodes’ refers to opposition.

⁵³ See Acosta, *Historia natural y moral*, Book 1 chapters 2 and 4: ‘Que el cielo es redondo por todas partes y se mueve en torno de si mismo’ (‘that the sky is round in its entirety and it moves about itself’) pp. 16-19 and ‘En que se responde, a lo que se alega de la escritura a la redondez del cielo’ (‘the reply to [arguments] drawn from scripture against the roundness of the sky’), pp.24-25.

⁵⁴ Acosta, *Historia natural y moral*, Book 1, chapter 16, p.57. This is a reference to the Book of Daniel in which, after Daniel has been thrown to the lions in Babylon, an angel appeared to Habakkuk in Judea and tells him to take a stew to Daniel which he had prepared for some field-labourers. When Habakkuk replied that he did not know where Babylon was, the angel seized him by the hair and carried him to Babylon where he delivered the food to Daniel. Once delivered, the angel carried him back to Judea. Daniel 14: 33-39.

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which] is reasonable’.⁵⁵ He pleads with the reader to allow him to follow the ‘thin thread of reason’ for ‘lack of eye-witnesses’ and argues that the first inhabitants of Peru must have come there by one of three ways: either deliberately by sea, or accidentally (blown there in a storm); or by land. He entertains the possibility of the sea routes but discards the deliberate sea crossing due to the ancients not having known the magnetic compass for open ocean navigation. The accidental crossing is more likely he says, but then disregards this second option due to the difficulty of understanding how so many people could have come to the Americas with so many animals (bearing in mind that all came originally from Noah’s ark). One small shipwreck, even if it did carry animals, would be unlikely to have been the origin of so many people and such rich fauna and they certainly could not have reached there by swimming.⁵⁶ With that, he reasoned, the most likely possibility was a land-bridge that joined the New World to the Old:

It is for me a great conjecture, to think that the new world, which we call the Indies, is not entirely divided and separated from the other world. And, to offer my opinion, I sometimes think that the one land and the other at some point join up and connect, or at least come close together. To the present there is no certainty that the opposite is true because to the Arctic Pole, which they call North, the entire longitude of the earth has not been discovered or known.⁵⁷

Acosta’s process of reasoning is impressive in that it successfully anticipated the main theories of human and animal migration to the Americas still in common currency today. For the purposes of this discussion, however, what is important is that his detailed reasoning follows a logical progression from the universalist starting point that all humans, including Indigenous Americans (and the Papal bull of 1537 put that matter beyond dispute) were descended from the lineage of Noah and thus had the same origins. Acosta continued by challenging the theories that tapped into European myths of Atlantis or that Indigenous Americans were somehow one of the lost tribes of Israel before concluding with the somewhat frustrating but eminently reasonable (and scientific) argument that we just cannot know for sure.⁵⁸ He concluded the first book with a chapter that again, reasonably we might think, considers, ‘what it is that Indians tend to recount about their origins’ and focusses on the origin stories of the central and southern Andean peoples.⁵⁹ This was by no means an

⁵⁵ Acosta, *Historia natural y moral*, Book 1, chapter 16, p.57.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, chapter 20, pp.69-71.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, chapters 22-24, pp.75-82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter 25, pp.82-84.

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exercise in anthropological relativism, however; nor was it any acknowledgement that even if Europeans could not know for sure how humans reached and populated the Americas, Indigenous explanations of their own origins were as valid as European—quite the opposite. He gave a very brief summary of the Andean origin story of the birth of ‘a Viracocha’ from Lake Titicaca who then founded his capital ‘in Tiaguanaco [Tiwanaku], where today you can see ruins and pieces of ancient and very strange buildings and that from there they came to Cuzco’.⁶⁰ The origin story of the Ayar siblings (mentioned above) he glossed as, ‘others tell how six, or I don’t know how many, men came out of a cave via an opening and that these began the propagation of mankind [...] From them, they say that Manco Capac originated, whom they recognise as the founder and head of the Incas [...]’.⁶¹ His point, however, was not to affirm these origin stories as possibilities—as this would have been an admission that Indigenous Americans (in this case Andeans) were not human (i.e. that they had different origins to Europeans, Asians and Africans) and would have laid him open to charges of heresy. More to the point, he simply did not accept this as a possibility, writing, ‘all this is full of lies and beyond reason’.⁶² His counterpoint to these origin stories, of course, was to cite scripture, arguing that Indigenous Americans were disabused of any notion that their ancestors originated in the New World, ‘with our Faith, which teaches us, that all men [humans] come from one first man’.⁶³

One final argument he made anticipated more modern historical debates about the legitimacy of certain types of sources—in this case reliance on oral tradition rather than written sources. He wrote: ‘all that exists that refers to the memory and relationship of the Indians goes back [no further than] four hundred years, and that everything before then is pure confusion and shadows, without it being possible to find anything that is certain’.⁶⁴ He stated that even the *quipucamayoc*—those charged with the task of keeping, recording and interpreting the knotted strings known as *quipus* that circulated in the Andes and served as mnemonic aids for recording different types of information—could not help and the issue here, he wrote, was their ‘lack of books and writing’.⁶⁵ It is at this point we gain an insight

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.82. Tiwanaku is found in present day Bolivia, approximately 20 km from the shores of Lake Titicaca. This particular origin story links to rise and apogee of the Tiwanaku civilization which controlled the southern to central Andean region during the years 500-1000 AD.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.83.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

‘Jesuits and “Race” in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia’s Letters to the King, 1604-1618’, in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022).

into another of his academic goals, which was the criteria for his attempt to classify and rank human civilizations according to their perceived intellectual achievement.

In book six of the *Historia natural* Acosta took issue with ‘those [Europeans] who consider the Indians to lack understanding’ and compared the Mexican and Inca civilizations with those of the republics of Athens and Rome. Both, notwithstanding the philosophy and learning of these ancient republics, followed teachings that were erroneous just like the ‘Republics of the Mexicans and of the Incas’.⁶⁶ In a rather paternalistic *apologia*, which was more a defence of the project to evangelize than it was a defence of Indigenous intellect, he argued, ‘even though they had many things [customs] that were barbarian, and without basis, they also had many other things that were worthy of admiration, which clearly shows that they have a natural capacity to be well taught’.⁶⁷ As examples of things ‘worthy of admiration’ he went on to discuss (in a cursory way) the complex calendar systems that were used by the Mesoamerican and Andean peoples.⁶⁸ The issue that, for Acosta, affected where Indigenous American civilizations ranked in the hierarchy of human civilization, was that they had never discovered or used ‘writing’ which, he narrowly defined as being invented ‘to refer to and mean immediately the words which we pronounce’.⁶⁹ He distinguished images or pictographs from writing because the former ‘serve only for the memory’.⁷⁰ His distinction was a nuanced one that arguably anticipated much later development of the theory of semiotics, as he wrote, ‘the one who invented them, did not do so to signify words, rather to denote that [a particular] thing’. As such, he continued, ‘they are not strictly letters nor writing, but characters, or memory aids’.⁷¹ Using this very fine distinction, he placed European civilization higher than those not only of the Indigenous American civilizations of Mexico and Peru, but also of the Japanese and the Chinese. The chapters that follow go on to express admiration for the level of learning in Japan and China, praising their universities, philosophy and study of the natural sciences. Before he does this, however, he proved to doubters that Chinese and Japanese ‘writing’ is not ‘letters’ as is commonly believed, but characters that signify ‘things’ rather than being immediate signifiers of the words that are pronounced. How else, he argued, would the same characters be

⁶⁶ Ibid., book 6, chapter 1, p.396. It is worth noting that neither the Mexica-led Triple Alliance (frequently known as the hegemonic Aztec Empire) nor the Inca empire were republics.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.396. For a discussion of the use of the term ‘barbarian’ in the European intellectual tradition, see Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, pp.15-26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., chapters 2 and 3, pp.397-400.

⁶⁹ Ibid., chapter 4, p.401.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

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understood across so many mutually unintelligible languages?⁷² He then turned to Mesoamerican civilization and discussed their pictographic writing systems, appreciating their ability to record information, ‘even though they are not as curious or as delicate as those of the Chinese and Japanese’. Significantly, he refuted the arguments of those Europeans who dismissed Mexican manuscripts as ‘superstition’ and ‘sorcery’.⁷³ Following this, he discussed the Andean method of recording information using *quipus* or knotted string and beads as mnemonic aids, and talked about their continued usefulness in contemporary sixteenth-century Peru: ‘if this is not ingenious, and if these men are beasts’, he argued, ‘then let whosoever be the judge, because what I judge to be certain is, that when this [method] is used, it is greatly advantageous to us’.⁷⁴

Ultimately, Acosta’s work served as a double-edged sword that both defended the universality of humankind and the rationality and civilization of Indigenous Americans whilst simultaneously ranking the civilizations of the world hierarchically. Not surprisingly, perhaps, he placed Europeans at the top, closely followed by the Chinese and Japanese and only then, by the Indigenous Americans. Aside from the fact that this rather cursory overview completely ignored ancient and contemporary civilizations from South Asia and Africa, it set the frame for intellectual justifications of European superiority in the years to come and became a model approach to the study of non-European cultures and peoples for fellow Jesuits.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a dual premise: firstly, that seeking to superimpose modern, primarily phenotypical racial hierarchies, on the reality of seventeenth-century Jesuits would be at best ahistorical and, at worst, a distortion of what was lived and understood at the time. Secondly, the Jesuits, in seeking to describe contemporary events with a particular salvific agenda, did nevertheless classify groups of people according to particular criteria. As part of this premise, the chapter sought to test the assertion by Peter Wade that, ‘ideas about human difference, while they may have involved a concept of race that was diverse,

⁷² Ibid., chapter 5, p.403. Acosta is correct in this regard but not in the value judgement that places ‘letters/words’ as immediate signifiers as indicative of a higher level of civilization than writing systems based on symbolic characters.

⁷³ Ibid., chapter 7, p.407.

⁷⁴ Ibid., chapter 8, p.412.

‘Jesuits and “Race” in Early Modern Chile: Valdivia’s Letters to the King, 1604-1618’, in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History ca. 1500-2017*, ed by Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, Forthcoming Spring 2022).

contested and even not very central, were certainly powerfully structured by ideas of European superiority’.⁷⁵

The plethora of typological categories that Luis de Valdivia used, writing from Chile in the early seventeenth century, reflected a strong preoccupation with opposition. In a survey of thirteen letters written over fourteen years, roughly twice as many categories referred to enmity as they did to friendship or alliance. Arguably, this is not surprising in a series of letters that were written to recount the progress of a war. It might be argued that in this could be seen the growth of ‘a concept of race structured by European superiority’ but in Valdivia’s letters to the king and his counsel, traces of modern concepts of race, ultimately, were so faint as to be barely noticeable. Role or social function seemed to be the principal method of classification that Valdivia used to refer to people. When this is placed in a colonial context, however, hierarchy takes sharper form. Hierarchical classification of human typology becomes clearer when we view the letters and their context through the lens of salvific cosmology, typified by the works of José de Acosta.

José de Acosta, the most influential Jesuit writer with respect to the Americas, without a doubt sought to classify humankind in terms of a civilizational hierarchy. Notwithstanding his powerful use of reason, or arguably because of the fact that he was using his reason from within a particular (European) cosmovision, this hierarchy not surprisingly placed European civilization at the top of the quite limited number of contemporary civilizations that he considered. An important nuance, however, was the universalist nature of the Catholic cosmovision that Acosta was a part of and through which he understood the world. All humans were rational beings, with souls, and all were descended from common ancestry. All were entitled to receive God’s grace, and all were entitled to salvation; place of origin, cultural differences, phenotypical variations—none of these mattered when it came to the capacity to receive Christ’s saving grace. Nevertheless, Acosta’s preoccupation was to try to understand the complexity of the lands and peoples he had encountered in the Americas whilst condensing that complexity into a simplified and coherent structure. This structure necessarily affirmed his cosmological reality in which the social hierarchy reflected the celestial and provided a blueprint for exporting that reality and bringing those who were outside of it, in. In seeking to defend the Indigenous Mapuche from the worst of colonial exactions and in his attempts to bring peace to the frontier in order to better evangelize, Luis

⁷⁵ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, p.8.

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de Valdivia's own cosmovision replicated that of Acosta's. The complexity of his typological categorisations, however, should serve as a reminder of the complexity of colonial life as understood and represented by members of the Society of Jesus.