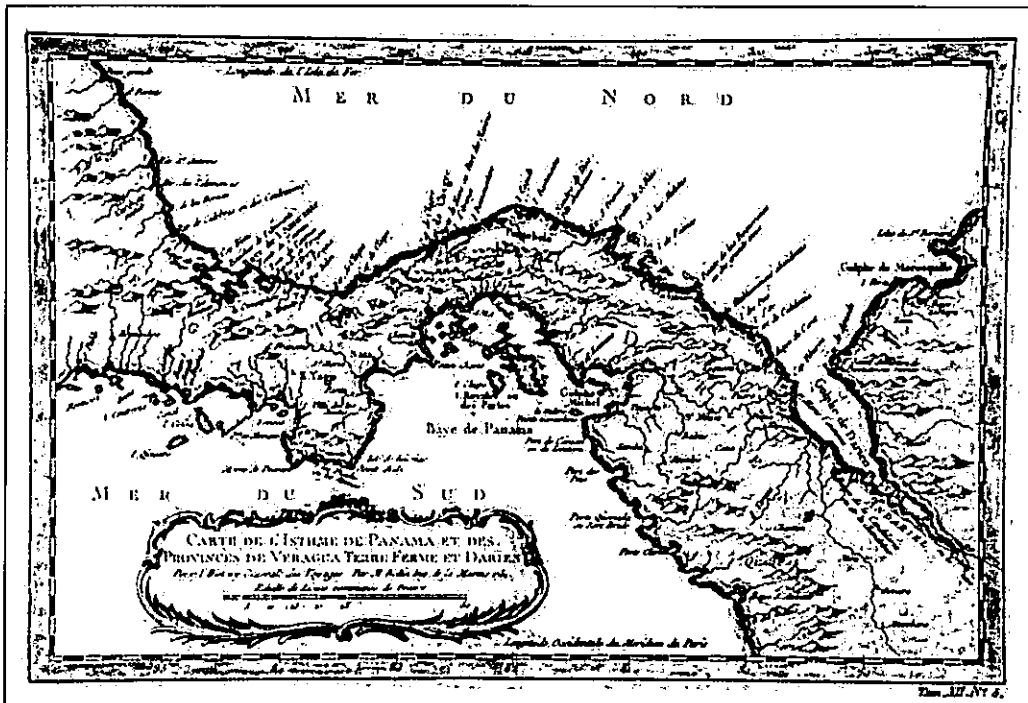


Chapter 2

BRIEF HISTORY OF PANAMA & ITS *AUDIENCIA*

16th Century History of Panama

The Caribbean coast of the Isthmus of Panama was discovered and claimed for the King of Spain by Rodrigo de Bastidas in 1501.¹ Shortly after, Alonso de Ojeda (also referred to as Hojeda)² followed, visiting the same area as Bastidas, just before Christopher Columbus³ arrived on his fourth voyage in 1502 and completed much of the exploration that his predecessors had begun.



Left: Map of the Isthmus of Panama titled: "CARTE DE L'ISTHME DE PANAMA ET DES PROVINCES DE VERAGUA TERRE FERME ET DARIEN."

This 1754 map was engraved by the French Naval Hydrographic Engineer (Ingénieur Hydrographe de la Marine Française), Jacques Nicolas Bellin, and published as part of Antoine François Prévosts monumental work, *L'Histoire Générale des Voyages*.

In 1508 the main land of the Americas, known as *Tierra Firme*, was divided into two seats of government. The government of Veragua, with an area that covered from the west of the Gulf of Urabá (Panama) to Cape Gracias a Dios (Honduras), was granted to Diego de Nicuesa, and the government of Uicaba or Urabá, which covered from the east of the Gulf of Urabá (Colombia) to Cape de la Vela (also Colombia), to Alonso de Ojeda. Both of these newly installed governments fell under the jurisdiction of the Island of Hispaniola, and had to report to its governor, Fray Nicolás de Ovando [and later Diego Colón (son of Christopher Columbus), who arrived in Santo Domingo on July 9, 1509, to succeed Ovando as governor].

Shortly thereafter, Nicuesa and Ojeda sent their expeditions, both ending with very limited success. In 1509 Nicuesa, after encountering many problems in Veragua, was able to found Nombre de Dios on the northern coast of Panama. As for Ojeda, he attempted to establish

a settlement called San Sebastián de Urabá, but because of heavy battles with the natives was forced to return to Santo Domingo, leaving Francisco Pizarro, the future conqueror of Peru, in command. There was nothing that Pizarro could do to stop the destruction of the new settlement and after departing the failed site the surviving colonists met with Martín Fernández de Enciso on the high seas. Enciso, unaware of the destruction of San Sebastián, had been sent to provide reinforcements. But, upon learning of the colony's fate, he immediately attempted to re-establish it, prior to finally deciding that it would be better to make a second attempt at a new site. This attempt took place with the establishment of the settlement that would come to be called Santa María la Antigua del Darién (1510) or Santa María la Antigua, as it is more commonly known.⁴

Santa María la Antigua started its life in controversy. San Sebastián had been established on the east side of the Gulf of Urabá, but the reestablishment had taken place on the west side. As a result, the newly established Colony of Santa María la Antigua was not under the jurisdiction of Ojeda, but Nicuesa. The Colonists, aware of the situation, decided to elect their own officials against Enciso's will. In 1511 Nicuesa heard the news of Santa María la Antigua and decided to abandon Nombre de Dios, making the trip to impose sanctions and impose his authority, but news of his intentions reached the Colony prior to the arrival of his ship. As soon as Nicuesa made land, he was taken prisoner and sent back to sea. He was never to reach port again and Vasco Núñez de Balboa took full charge.

Balboa wrote to the king with news of the riches in gold of the area around the Gulf of Urabá known as Darién. After receiving the letter with the presents in gold that came with it, the King and his personal adviser, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca (Bishop of Badajoz), rechristened the area as "Castilla del Oro" (Castile the Golden).⁵ In 1513, Balboa departed from Santa María la Antigua, by now the colonial seat of government of Tierra Firme, on an expedition that crossed the Isthmus. From a gulf that was named San Miguel, on September 25, 1513, Balboa became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean (South Sea) from the coast of America.

In 1514, Pedro Arias Ávila or Pedrarias, as he was better known, arrived from Spain and took on the title of governor of Castilla del Oro. Jealous of his popular predecessor, who, because of his discoveries, had been proclaimed "Adelantado" of the South Seas and governor of the Provinces of Coiba and Panama, but conveniently for Pedrarias was still subordinate to him⁶, in defiance of the Crown's desires Pedrarias beheaded Balboa on January 15, 1519, in the town of Acla, located in the same area as Santa María la Antigua.

Then Pedrarias, using boats left by Balboa, sailed from the Gulf of San Miguel on the Pacific Ocean to a deep, protected bay, and there, on the site of an Indian village called Panama by its inhabitants, oversaw the foundation, on August 15, 1519, of the first settlement on the Pacific coast of America, *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Panamá* (Our Lady of the Assumption of Panama)⁷, named for the day celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, proclaiming it in the name of Queen Joanna of Castile and her son King Charles. This settlement was founded under direct orders from the King of Spain to Governor Pedrarias, which stated:

"The settlement that is to be made in the Gulf of San Miguel in the South Sea [Pacific Ocean] must be the best port that can be found and the most convenient for the grants on that gulf, because according to what Vasco Núñez [de Balboa] writes, it would be very necessary that there would be some ships, so as to discover the coast of the gulf and the territory of it and also, because of the grants of

recovery of things necessary to the replenishment of it [the new settlement], and so that these ships can take advantage, it is necessary that it will be done there.”⁸

There is not much documentation about the original name of the city since, as in the case of Santo Domingo, the official document dictated upon its foundation is not known to have survived; but what documents from the period do show is that shortly after its foundation the settlement was moved a distance of a ½ league down the coast due to the location of a better harbor for its port. With this move, it seems that its full name was left behind, since, from here on, it appears simply as Panama.⁹

It didn't take long for the Crown to find interest in the region and only two years after its foundation, King Charles V, on September 15, 1521, at Burgos, by a decree of Cardinal/Governor Adrian of Utrecht (Charles V adviser who was born Florencio Adriano Boeyens in 1459), gave the new settlement the rank of city and granted it a Coat of Arms.¹⁰ The interest of King Charles in this region did not stop there: starting early in the 1520s he ordered surveys for a canal route through the Isthmus.



Left: The Coat of Arms of Panama.

According to the decree of September 15, 1521, Panama's Coat of Arms was to have the following description:

Inside a shield, resting on a gilded field, a yoke and a sheaf of arrows with blue tips and silver feathers are positioned to the left, and two caravels with a star above them to the right. The entire inner shield is surrounded by a border of castles and lions.¹¹

Imagery of the Coat of Arms:

- The yoke and sheaf of arrows were used to represent the personal devices of King Charles' grandparents, the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella.¹²
- The two caravels represented the hope that from Panama the route to the land of the spices would be found.
- The star above the caravels was used as a reference to the South Pole.

Almost as soon as its foundation, Pedrarias, also aware of the importance of Panama, ordered Nombre de Dios, which connected the city of Panama to the Atlantic, to be repopulated and immediately established a trail to unite these two settlements. In 1520, Natá was erected, being officially founded by Pedrarias in 1522, with the intention of using it as a border or launching point to the rich mines of Veragua and the unexplored lands of Central America. In the early 1520s, at the same time that Hernando Cortés was concluding his conquest of the Aztec Civilization in Mexico (in 1523), from the city of Panama new expeditions were being organized, and as they were carried out the discovered lands of Central America began to shape the New Continent.

Around the Gulf of San Miguel the area continued to be mined for gold, but the amount started dropping off as the years went by. With the foundation of Panama, the city of Santa María la Antigua del Darién and the town of Acla had immediately lost their importance and were rapidly abandoned, following orders from Pedrarias, who ordered the settlers from these towns to move to Panama, which had been transformed into the new seat of government for the region.

To compensate for the decline in gold in the area around the Gulf of San Miguel, a new source was quickly selected. During his last voyage, Christopher Columbus had written the king saying that in two days he had seen in the region of Veragua more signs of gold than he had seen in the Island of Hispaniola in four years.¹³ Christopher Columbus had quickly attempted to colonize this area with the foundation of Santa María de Belén, but due to the hostility of the natives and because the Colony was established too close to the shores of the Belén (Bethlehem) River and was in constant threat of the rising waters, this attempt ended in failure.

With the establishment of Natá, bordering Veragua, war was declared on the natives; Urraca united tribes from this region and fought the Spaniards for 9 years with no rest until his death in 1531. After the death of Urraca, Felipe Gutiérrez obtained permission from the Crown of Spain to colonize this area, but by 1535 his quest had ended in failure.

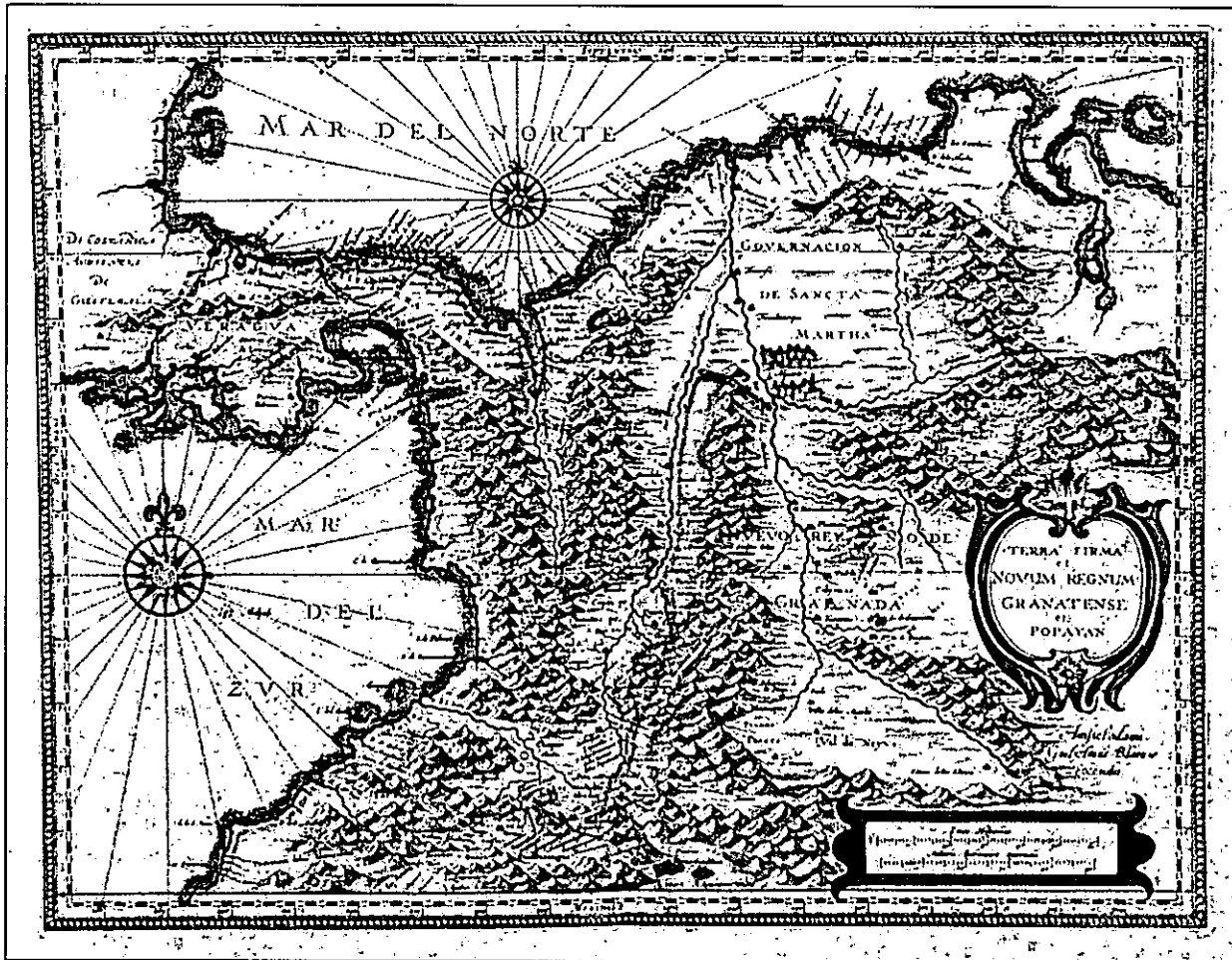
Since Christopher Columbus had been the discoverer of Veragua, the Colón family (heirs of Christopher Columbus) protested what they saw as an incursion into their family estate. By Royal decree on January 19, 1537, King Charles V resolved the matter, officially granting Diego Colón, son of the great navigator, and his successors an area of 25 leagues, proclaimed as the Dukedom of Veragua (*Ducado de Veragua*). The titles of Duke of Veragua and Marquis of Jamaica were bestowed upon Diego Colón posthumously as he had died in 1526.¹⁴

The inhabitants of Natá quickly proposed to the Colón family to take on the job of colonizing and populating this area, but they had no interest in this venture. Finally, in 1556, an agreement was made between Luis Colón, son of Diego Colón and grandson of Christopher Columbus, and the Spanish Crown, where the Colón family would retain all their titles of nobility and get a fixed income of 7,000 ducats per year for life, in exchange for renouncing their rights to these lands. With this agreement, the area of Jamaica continued to be part of the Colón family estate, but in fact they had given away all legal claims to everything in the Province of Veragua and its Dukedom, as well as the Dukedom of La Vega (on the Island of Hispaniola), which now had become part of the Crown's possessions.¹⁵

With this incorporation of the territory of Veragua, a decree was sent from Valladolid, Spain, on January 21, 1557, to the governor of Tierra Firme, giving the inhabitants of Natá the faculty to populate Veragua.¹⁶ Francisco Vásquez was quickly tasked with taking care of conquering Spain's new acquisition, which, when completed, ultimately allowed for a new division of the Isthmus of Panama into two major provinces: Veragua and Castilla del Oro (also known as the Province of Tierra Firme).¹⁷

The conquest of Veragua had come at the right moment. With the quantity of gold being mined in the Province of Tierra Firme decreasing to alarming levels, augmenting the excavating costs, Veragua had now become a major source for this yellow metal.

According to a transcript of a document located at the National Archives of Panama (original located at the *Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia* in Madrid, Spain), during 1565 there were foundries (*casas de fundición*) in the cities of Concepción and Santa Fe, in the Province of Veragua, working under the guidelines of the decrees (*ordenanzas*) that were made by Captain Francisco Vásquez, conqueror of the province. However, in the Province of Tierra Firme, there were no foundries operating, because the previous decrees for melting, assaying and marking metals were not in effect at this time, since there were no mines being worked there.¹⁸



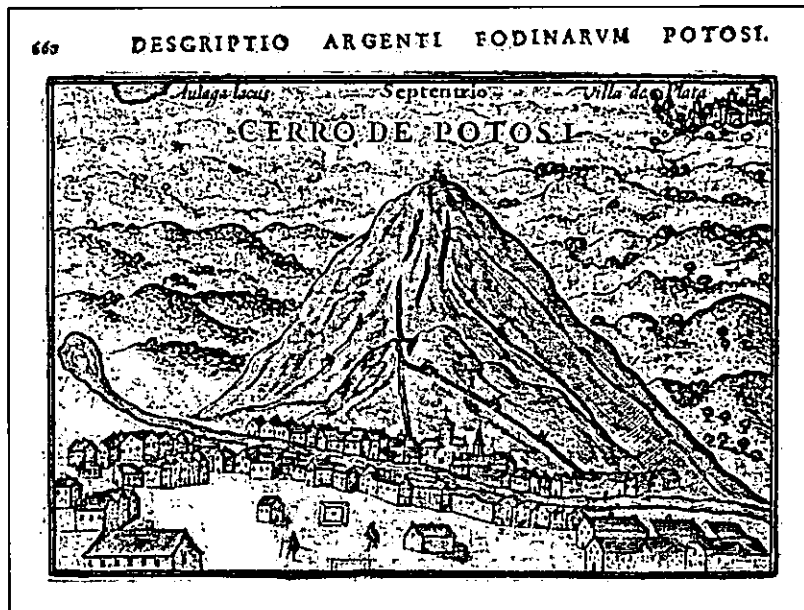
Map of the Kingdoms of *Tierra Firme* and *New Granada* titled: "TERRA FIRMA et NOVUM REGNUM GRANATENSE et POPAYAN." This map, published in the 1650 Dutch edition of Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Novus*, belongs to the earlier group of plates published from 1630 onward by Joan's father, Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638).

Image supplied by Classical Images – www.classicalimages.com

As early as 1522, attempts were also being made to reach Peru (also known as Pirú or Birú), but it was not until 1524 when a clergyman, Hernando de Luque, made a pact with Diego de Almagro and Francisco Pizarro, later reaffirmed in 1526, that the conquest of Peru became a reality. Pizarro accomplished the goal in 1532, during his third expedition.

After the treasure from Peru started arriving in Spain, Charles V granted Nombre de Dios the rank of city on November 29, 1537, by Royal decree, and gave it a Coat of Arms on December 7 of the same year. This Coat of Arms reads: "In Nomine Meo Foveat Me" (In my name, help me).¹⁹ This was just the beginning for this port, as it was soon realized that the

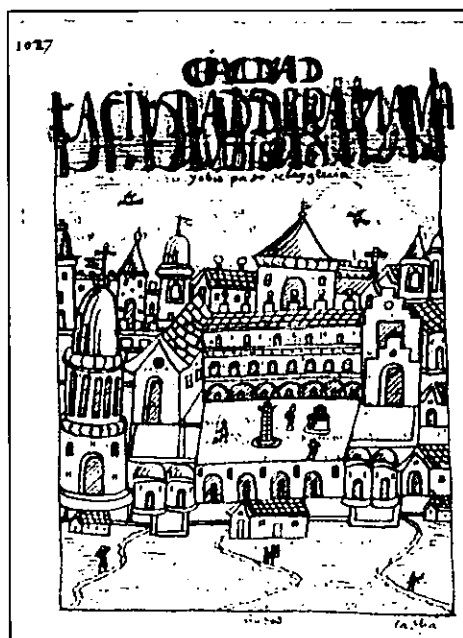
treasure of the Inca Civilization was not the only treasure that was to come out of Peru. In 1539 a very rich mountain of silver was discovered in Potosí (registered in 1545)²⁰, and with this discovery Panama was reassured that its use as a transit route for the riches of America would be maintained for years to come.



Left: “DESCRIPATIO ARGENTI FODINARVM POTOSI,” engraving by Jodocus Hondius, as published in Petrus [Pierre, Pieter] Bertius’ *Tabularum Geographicarum Contractarum*, Amsterdam, 1616.

This beautiful engraving depicts the city of Potosí with its legendary “silver mountain” (discovered in 1539 and registered in 1545). The discovery of this seemingly limitless supply of silver reassured Panama that its function as a transit route for the riches of the Americas would be maintained for years to come.

The Audiencia de Panamá & the 16th Century



CIVIDAD LA CIUDAD DE PANAMA AVDIENCIA Y OBISPADO DE LA IGLESIA, by the Inca Felipe Guzmán Poma de Ayala, 1580. Courtesy of the Royal Library of Denmark - Manuscript from the “Old Royal Collection” (Gammel Kongelic Samling) – GKS 2232.

The *Audiencias* were judicial tribunals established to take care of criminal, civil and ecclesiastical matters in the Colonies. The decision of the judges, or *oidores* as they were known, could only be appealed through the Council of the Indies in Spain.

As a direct consequence of Panama’s function as a transit point, the Spanish Crown agreed that this should be the site of the third *Audiencia* to be established in America. Like it had been done in Mexico and Santo Domingo, years earlier, the *Audiencia de Panamá* began in 1538 having a vast territory that included as far north as Honduras and to the south even including Peru under its jurisdiction.

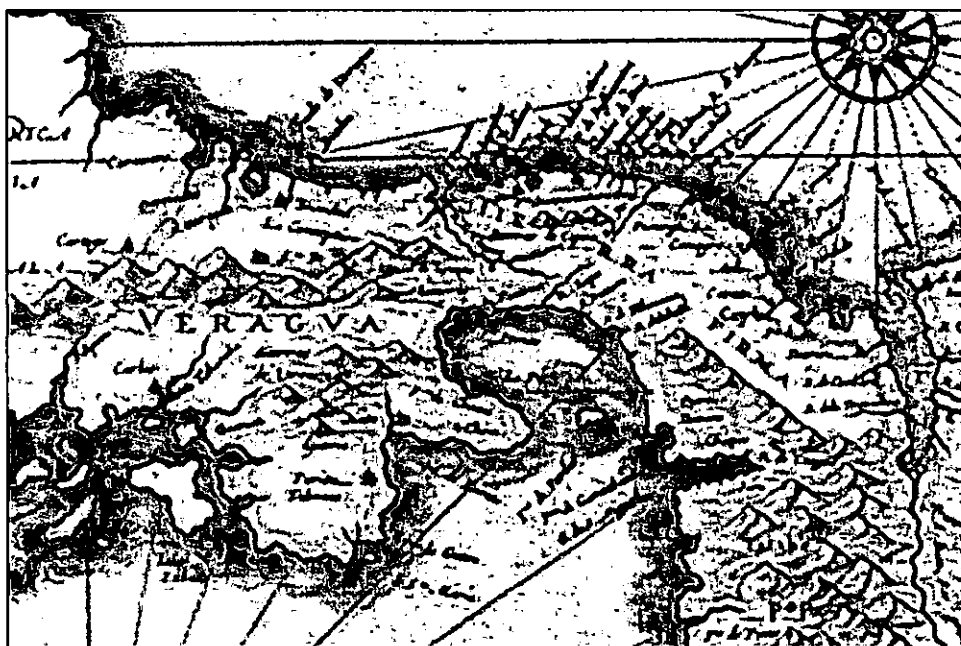
In 1539, because Panama was a capital city, it became clear that the President of the *Audiencia* would also serve as governor of this city located in the Province of Tierra Firme, in addition to supervising the government of the Province of Veragua on the Isthmus. Later, during the second period of this *Audiencia*, the practice of President-Governor continued, but now he would be under the supervision of the Viceroy of Peru.

Panama and its new *Audiencia* became responsible for the supervision and transport of all precious metals from these areas. Soon there were abuses of authority and corruption. These, added to the long distances covered by its jurisdiction, forced Spain to decide to dissolve the *Audiencia de Panamá* and to establish two new *Audiencias* to replace it. This decision took place after passage of the New Laws of 1542, which concerned the Government of the Indies and the better treatment of the “Indians.”

In 1542, with the abolishment of the *Audiencia de Panamá*, its previous jurisdiction became part of two new *Audiencias*: “*de la Ciudad de Reyes*” (Lima, 1542) and “*de los Confines*” (Guatemala, 1543).²¹ In 1535 the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) was established, but when in 1544 the Viceroyalty of Peru was brought into existence, Panama, not happy with the turn of events, became part of it. Its previous position of authority contributed in creating a situation that would cause many problems over jurisdiction of the Isthmus to whoever held the office of Viceroy of Peru.

In 1563, after Panama’s many arguments in an attempt to have Spain consider the return of this judicial tribunal (the *Audiencia*) to their city, it was decided that this would be done. The *Audiencia de Guatemala* was abolished and Panama got its *Audiencia* back in 1565, but in the time that it had been without one, many other settlements such as Compostela (1548), Santa Fe de Bogotá (1549), La Plata (1559), Guadalajara (1560), Quito (1563) and Chile (1565), had gotten *Audiencias*. This and the loss of the territory of Guatemala, once again, by the tribunal of Panama in 1568, established a very limited coverage under its jurisdiction during its second period.²²

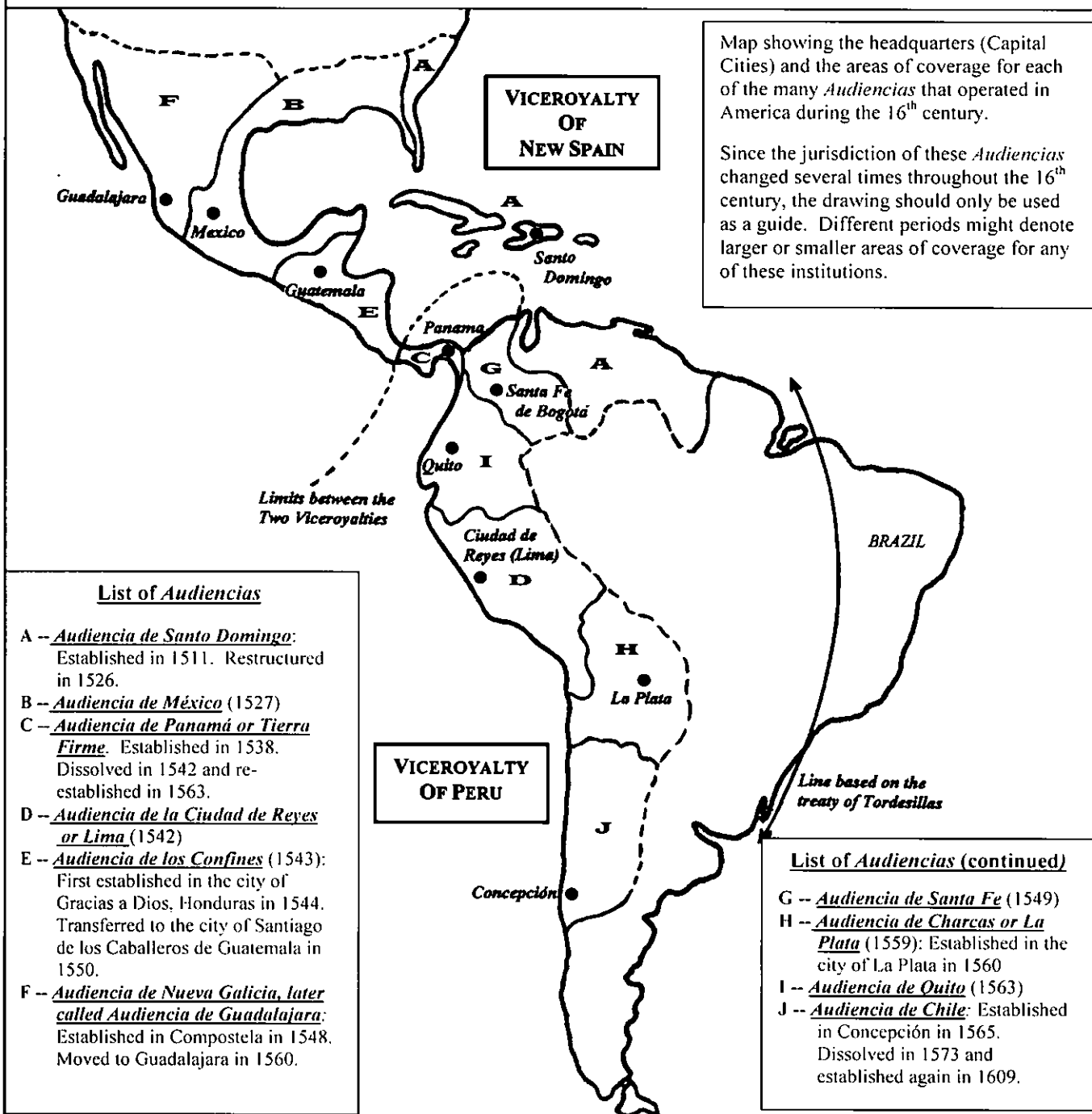
We know from a letter by judge (*oidor*) Alonso Criado de Castilla of the *Audiencia de Panamá*, to the king in 1575,²³ that by this year only the Provinces of Veragua and Tierra Firme in the Kingdom of the same name remained under the jurisdiction of this *Audiencia*. This letter demonstrates how the jurisdiction of the *Audiencia de Panamá*, by the end of the 16th century, had become an area very similar to what we know today as the Republic of Panama.



Left: View of the Provinces of Veragua and Tierra Firme, within the Kingdom of Tierra Firme.

This complete map, published in the 1650 Dutch edition of Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Novus*, can be seen on page 27.

THE SPANISH VICEROYALTIES AND AUDIENCIAS IN AMERICA DURING THE 16th CENTURY



AREAS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE VICEROYALTIES OF NEW SPAIN AND PERU.

The Viceroyalty of New Spain (seat of government located in Mexico): Its coverage included the discovered lands in North America, Central America (with the exception of Panama), the islands in the Caribbean sea and the areas of Venezuela and Guayana, in South America.

The Viceroyalty of Peru (also called New Castile) (seat of government located in Lima): Its coverage included Panama and the remaining discovered lands of South America, with the exception of Brazil, which belonged to Portugal.

- (1) Historia General de Panamá, Vol. 1, No. 1, *Las Sociedades Originarias y el Orden Colonial*, directed by A. Castellero Calvo (Panama, 2004), pp. 81-87 and p. 89. Section written by the editor, Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Los Primeros Europeos - El Descubrimiento del Istmo: de Rodrigo de Bastidas a Balboa." The name of the explorer who first discovered the coast of Panama has been previously printed as Rodrigo Galván de Bastidas. Dr. Castellero Calvo, not able to find any documentary evidence to corroborate the Galván portion of this name, has traced the error to a correspondence from a military man, Andrés Baleato, who included the explorer's name in this manner in his 1819 letter describing Panama. The letter was first published by Antonio B. Cuervo in his *Colección de Documentos sobre la Geografía y la Historia de Colombia* (Collection of Documents Regarding the Geography and History of Colombia), in 1891. Since then the error of describing this name as Rodrigo Galván de Bastidas has appeared in many publications.
- (2) Historia General de Panamá, Vol. 1, No. 1 (ibid, n. 1), pp. 87-89. Section written by the editor, Alfredo Castellero Calvo, "Los Primeros Europeos - El Descubrimiento del Istmo: de Rodrigo de Bastidas a Balboa." Although Christopher Columbus is commonly portrayed as the second European to visit the coast of Panama, this is not accurate. A study of documentary evidence from the period has demonstrated that Alonso de Ojeda, having departed Spain in 1500, did in fact precede Columbus.
- (3) Christopher Columbus' name is known as Cristóbal Colón in Spanish. Although the name of Columbus' did become Hispanized, most English readers are most familiar with this name in its English form. So, for this reason I have opted to use the name as Christopher Columbus in all instances when referring to this great navigator. At the same time I have retained the last name of Colón when referring to Columbus' descendants or his brother, Bartolomeo.
- (4) Lucena Salmoral, Manuel. Biblioteca Iberoamericana, No. 91, *Vasco Núñez de Balboa descubridor de la Mar del Sur* (Madrid, Spain, 1988), p. 28; Historia General de Panamá, Vol. 1, No. 1 (op. cit., n. 1) p. 104. Santa Maria la Antigua del Darién was first established by Vasco Núñez de Balboa and Martín Fernández de Enciso with the name of *La Guardia*. Martín Fernández de Enciso, in 1510, officially re-baptized the settlement with the new name of Santa Maria la Antigua del Darién.
- (5) E. J. Castellero R., *Historia de Panamá* (Panama, 1989), p. 23; H. Thomas, *Rivers of Gold-The Rise of the Spanish Empire, from Columbus to Magellan* (New York, NY, 2003), p. 329.
- (6) Castellero R. (ibid, n. 5). It is also good to mention that the "Adelantado," at the time of the Spanish conquest and colonization, was a person granted with high political, military and judicial powers in America.
- (7) C. A. Arauz & P. Pizzurno, *El Panamá Hispano 1501-1821* (Panama, 1991), p. 45; M. C. Mena García, *Temas de Historia Panameña* (Panama, 1996), p. 193.
- (8) W. H. Prescott, *Peru* (New York, NY, 1900), Vol. I, p. 157, footnote n. 5. Prescott writes that this information is according to the "Colección de los Viajes y Descubrimientos" (Madrid, 1829), Tom. iii. No. 3. Capitulo de carta escrita por el Rey Católico a Pedrarias Dávila, ap. Navarrete." This information is as follows: "El asiento que se oviere de hacer en el golfo de S. Miguel en la mar del sur debe de ser en el puerto que mejor se hallare y mas conveniente para la Contratación de aquel golfo, porque segund lo que Vasco Nuñez escribe, seria muy necesario que allí haya algunos navios, así para descubrir las costas del golfo; y de la comarca del, como para la Contratación de rescates de las otras cosas necesarias al buen proveimiento de aquello; é para que estos navios aprovechen es menester que se hagan allá."
- (9) J. B. Sosa, *Panamá La Vieja 15 de Agosto 1519-1919* (Panama, 1955), p. 18. According to, "Comentarios y escritos, 1572." This information is taken from the notes of Esteban Garibay. "...se pasó la población [de Panamá] media legua más abajo por llegarse a gozar de la comodidad de un pequeño puerto. Esto dicen los que saben de la fundación, parte por la relación de vecinos antiguos, parte por historias impresas."
- (10) Archivo General de Indias (AGI): Panamá: 233, L. 1, F. 301-302. Document dated in Burgos, September 15, 1521. The margin of this document reads: "título de çibdad y armas a la çibdad de panama." Text from the original: "Don carolos y es por quanto por parte de vos el conçejo justiçia rregidores cavalleros escuderos / ofiçiales y hombrès dl pueblo de panamà q' ésta fùndada en la costa dña àr del Súr de castilla del oro nõs es hecha rrelaçiõn q' por la gracia de nro' señor el dcho pueblo fue fùndado hecho y poblado por nro' mandado y que comò quiera q' hasta aquí no le aviamòs nonbrado çibdad ni dado facultad parà silo llamar ni menos hasta agora se le avia dado armàs y divisas q' traxiese en sus sus pendones y pusiesè en sus sellos y en otras partes dond las çibdades y villas destos rreynos las acostùnbràn poner y traer / y nos fue suplicado en vro' nonbre q'

mándasemòs nonbrar çibdad al dicho pueblo de panamá y vos dieseemòs facultad para selo llamar y yntitular d aquí adlante y que vos dieseemòs y señala demòs armàs pa q' traxesedes en los dichos pendones de la dicha çibdad y se pusiesen en su sello y en las / otras cosas partes y lugarès donde fuese nesçesario lo cual por nosotros visto y acatando y considerando comò el dicho pùeblo fue fündado y hecho y poblado en la dicha costa del sùr dla dicha castilla dl oro pòr nro' mandado y es el primero y el màs prèncipal pueblo que al presente ay en aq' llas partes y costa de la màr del sur de castilla del oro y de q' esperamos en la mysericordia de dios nro' señor sera pa servycio y honrra y aqeçintamyento destos rèynos y porq' los vezinos y moradores del dicho pueblo fuistes los primeros pobladores dla dicha costa del sùr de lo qual dios nro' señor ha sido y es muy servido y nra' santa fee catolica ' muy ensalçada y como en poblar y sostener el dicho puèblo los vezinòs y mòradores dl hastaora aveis rresçibido y pasado mùchos trabajos y fatigas y peligros y considerando los mùchos y buenos servicios q' los dichos vezinos y pobladores del dicho puèblo de panama nos aveis fecho en lo suso dicho y porq' es cosa cònvenible q' los q' bien sirven sean honrrados y faborescidos y rremunerados y pòrq' el dicho pueblo sea mas noblecido y honrrado tuvimòslo pòr bièn y pòr la presente damos titulo y nònbre de çibdad dicho pueblo de panamá y queremos y es nra' voluntad que se nònbre y yntitule y pòr la presnte le nòbramòs y yntitulamòs la nueva çibdad de panamá y vos damòs liçençia y facultad y autoridad pa q' de aquí adlante para siempre /a mas la nonbreis y yntituleys la nueva çibdad de panamá dl Sur d castilla del oro y màndamos q' asi sea por todos nonbrada y yntitulada y q' goze de todas las hònrras preheminènçias y prerrogativàs y ynmùnidades que por ser çibdad le deven según dadas y puede y debe aver y gozar segund lo usan y gozàn las çibdades destos nros rreynos y señorios de castilla pòr rrazon dl dicho titulo / otro si pòr màs hònrrar y noblesçer la dicha çibdad vos señalamòs y q'remos q' tenga pòr armas un escùdo el campò dorado y en la mitad dla la mano derecha un yùgo y un manojo de frechas pàrdillo todo con los caxcos // azules // y plumàs plateadas lo qual es la devisa dlos catolicos rrèy y rrèyna nros padres E ahuelos y señores q' ayan sta gloria y en la otra mitad dos caravelas por señal q' esperamos en nro señor q' por alli se ha d hazer el descubrimiento d la espeçeria y encima d llas una estrella en señal dl polo antartico y por / orla dl dicho escudo castillos y leones en un escudo a tal comò este las quales dichas armàs y devisa damòs a la dicha çibdad para que las pueda traèr y poner y traygais y pongais en los pèndones y sellos y escudos vànderas dla dicha çibdad y én otràs pàrtes dònde quisieredes y fuere menester según y comò y dla forma y manera q' las traèn y ponèn las / otràs çibdades destos dichos nros reynos de castilla a quien tenemòs dado armàs...dada en la cibdad d burgos a quinze dias dl mes de setiembre año dl nasçimyento de nro Salvador ihu xpò de mill y quinientos y veynte y un años..."

- (11) AGI (ibid, n. 10); Historia General de Panamá, Vol. 1, No. 1 (ibid, n. 1), front cover and p. 109; A. Herrera, *Medallas de Proclamaciones y Jura de los Reyes de España* (Madrid, Spain, 1882), Lámina 11, No. 21 and Lámina 19, No. 52 & 53; AGI: Mapas y Planos-Panamá, 144. The sample drawing that accompanied the decree that granted Panama its Coat of Arms is not known to have survived. This has resulted in many different interpretations appearing throughout the years. In the hope of attempting to provide the most accurate image of what Panama's original Coat of Arms must have looked like I have used many sources as guides. These sources are the following: the description provided in the decree from 1521, images of the yoke and arrows from the coinage of Ferdinand and Isabella, Panama's Coat of Arms included as part of a 1688 drawing of the city of Panama by Fernando Saavedra (original in Panama's History Museum), illustration of Panama's Coat of Arms from *Teatro Eclesiástico* by Gil González Dávila (1655), the Coat of Arms images contained in Panama's Proclamation Medals of 1724 and 1747, and an image of Panama's Coat of Arms included as part of a 1748 drawing of Panama's Central Plaza. In addition, for the purpose of accurate description, I must also explain that in heraldic language the right-hand-side and left-hand-side are described from the point of view of the shield bearer. This being the case I have modified the description of the components of the Coat of Arms to better reflect them from the reader's point of view, rather than the proper heraldic description given in the decree from 1521.
- (12) J. Eslava Galán, *Los Reyes de España. Vol. 1, La Vida y la Época de Los Reyes Católicos*. (Barcelona, Spain, 1996), pp. 47-48. The standards for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were a yoke (yugo) and a sheaf of arrows (flechas), respectively. It is believed that the selection of these items by the Spanish Monarchs followed an ancient custom in which each member of a couple, upon marriage, would choose as a personal device an object for which its spelling started with the same initial as the name of his or her spouse.
- (13) C. A. Arauz & P. Pizzurno, *El Panamá Hispano 1501-1821* (Panama, 1991), p. 22.
- (14) Castillero R. (op. cit., n. 5), pp. 42-43; M. Zabala Menéndez, *Historia Española de los Títulos Concedidos en Indias* (Madrid, 1994), Vol. 1, pp. 23-25.

- (15) M. M. de Peralta, *Costa Rica, Nicaragua y Panamá en el Siglo XVI* (Madrid and Paris, 1883). There are transcripts of the two documents related to the agreement between Luis Colón and the Crown of Spain here. The first is the letter offering these lands dated at Valladolid, July 11, 1556 and the second is the agreement as accorded by the King dated as well in Valladolid, December 2, 1556.
- (16) de Peralta (ibid, n. 15). A copy of the decree from Valladolid dated January 21, 1557, granting Natá with the faculty to populate Veragua can be located here.
- (17) Archivos Nacionales de Panamá (ANP), Vol. IV, D. 65. Letter of August 22, 1565 by Bartolomé Vásquez, son of Francisco Vásquez, providing a summary of his father's services in the Provinces of Tierra Firme and Veragua.
- (18) ANP, Vol. IV, D. 66. From Transcript: "En la ciudad de la Concepcion y en esta de Santa Fé de la Provincia de Veragua hay casa de fundicion...este fundidor [en la Concepción] funde en la Casa de fundicion, el oro que se saca de las Minas, el cual en presencia de los oficiales Reales que allí residen hacen las fundiciones; y en esta Provincia de Tierra firme, no hay Casa de fundicion. En este Reino de Tierra firme como no se labran Minas agora, no hay ordenanzas para las dichas Minas, en Veragua hay ciertas ordenanzas que hizo el Capitan Francisco Vazquez, Conquistador que fué de aquella Provincia...[con respecto a Tierra Firme no se usan] las ordenanzas que hay para la fundicion y ensaye, y marca, y cuentos, porque en ninguna casa de estas hay en este Reino, por no se labrar minas en el, como está dicho; de Veragua se enviará la razon de esto, que allí la hay." In several parts of this document, written in Veragua, which was part of the Kingdom of *Tierra Firme*, the word *Reino* (Kingdom) is used by mistake, since it should read *Provincia* (Province), as it talks about the mines in this province having the same name as the kingdom.
- (19) Castillero R. (op. cit., n. 5), p. 36.
- (20) Prescott (op. cit., n. 6), Vol. II, p. 104, footnote n. 12.
- (21) de Peralta (op. cit., n. 15), pp. 130-132. Spain ordered by Royal Decrees of September 7 and 13, 1543, for the *Audiencia de los Confines* to be erected. On May 16, 1544, the new *Audiencia* was installed in the City of Gracias a Dios, Honduras. On July 25, 1545 the oidor Lic. Pedro Ramírez de Quiñones presented a document showing the conveniences of moving it to Guatemala. By Royal Decrees of December 25, 1548 and June 1, 1549, Lic. Alonso López de Cerrato, President of the *Audiencia*, is given the faculty to conduct the move. The transfer to the city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala is finally approved by Royal Decree of July 1, 1550.
- (22) F. Morales Padrón, *Atlas Histórico Cultural de América* (Canarias, 1987), Vol. 2, pp. 398-403. The *Audiencia de Nueva Galicia* was established first in Compostela in 1548 and moved to Guadalajara in 1560. Some *Audiencias* were inaugurated at later dates: Santa Fe (de Bogotá) in 1550, Charcas (established at La Plata) in 1561 and Quito in 1564. The *Audiencia de Chile* was established in 1565, but dissolved in 1573 and re-established in 1609.
- de Peralta (op. cit., n. 15), p. 132. With the abolishment of the *Audiencia de los Confines* in 1563 and until its re-establishment in 1568, the previous jurisdiction over Guatemala became a responsibility of the *Audiencia de México*. During this time, the Provinces of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Veragua became part of the reinstated *Audiencia de Panamá*.
- (23) O. Jaen Suarez, *Geografía de Panamá* (Panama), Vol. I, pp. 20-21. A transcript of the original can be located here. "Sumaria descripcion del Reyno de Tierra Firme [Nombre de Dios, mayo 7, 1575] Por Alonso Criado de Castilla. La tierra que está poblada en aqueste reyno hasta do se estiende la jurisdiccion de Vuestra Real Audiencia de Panamá, consiste en espacio de...Dividese éste espacio en tierra avitada en dos partes prencipales; la una es la provincia de Veragua...La otra segunda parte deste dicho reyno, es el que propiamente se dice Tierra-Firme, caveza del qual es la ciudad de Panamá, á do reside vuestra real Audiencia, presidente y oydores é iglesia cathedral."

Chapter 3

THE 16th CENTURY PERUVIAN MINTS

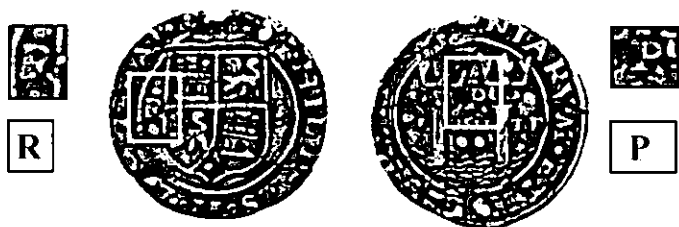
To be able to fully grasp the story of the Panama Mint we need to first take a look at its immediate predecessors -- the three mints that were established in cities of the Province of Peru.¹ The story of these three mints contains invaluable information for the study of the mint of Panama.

Mint at the City of Kings (Lima)

On August 21, 1565, Philip II, King of Spain, signed a decree at El Bosque de Segovia authorizing the City of Kings to establish a mint. "City of Kings" is the original name given to Lima, as it was founded on the 6th of January, the day in which the Catholic Church celebrates the arrival of the three wise men -- in Spanish known as Los Reyes Magos (the Magi Kings) -- at the site of Jesus' birth, the day of Epiphany.

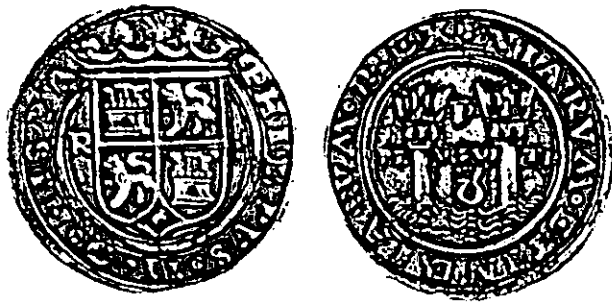
The Governor, Lope García de Castro, acknowledges on June 3, 1566, that he had received the decree and around the same time Gonzalo de Herrera, assayer and smelter of the city of Lima, sent a petition to Spain demanding that the office of assayer of the new mint be granted to him.² But by the end of 1566, García de Castro was still encountering many complications in finding officials that knew how to make the coins, and requested the help of Alonso de Rincón³, who had previously worked in the mint of Toledo during the 1530s as assistant to his father Martin del Rincón, and also in the mint of Mexico between 1542 and 1545.⁴ For his help in this matter, Alonso de Rincón was later rewarded by the Governor with the office of assayer sought by Gonzalo de Herrera.⁵

By 1567 there was still work to be done before the mint could begin production and as stated in a letter from April 2 of that year, García de Castro wrote the king suggesting that someone be sent from Spain to superintend what the new mint was to produce. On February 7, 1568, García de Castro informed that the minting of coins would begin in a month. But yet another delay would prevent the execution of these plans.



2 Reales coin minted in Lima (1568-1569). As can be seen above, this coin shows on the obverse the R for assayer Alonso de Rincón, and on the reverse the P for Peru. This is representative of the first coinage of South America.

On September 2, 1568, finally, the official inauguration of the Lima mint took place with Alonso de Rincón as its first assayer. The letter R was stamped on all the coins minted during the period that Rincón served, as he was responsible for the decreed weight and purity of the silver he assayed. The letter P was also stamped to acknowledge that these coins were minted in Peru.⁶



Lima 8 *Reales* coin, produced in 1569 without authorization from Spain.

The first coins minted in Peru, like those of Mexico's second period, used the pillars and waves design, and were produced regularly from 1568 to late 1569. Soon after October 11 of that year a Dr. Gabriel de Loarte prosecuted the treasurer, Lope de Mendaña, and other mint officials with several charges including the production of coins with less silver than officially decreed and the minting of 8 *Reales*, which had not been authorized by the king. During 1570

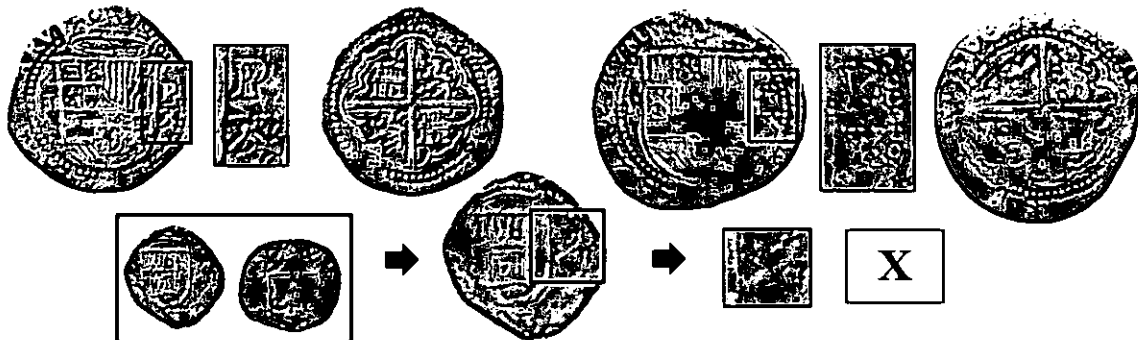
coins were examined showing that about 10% were underweight, but corruption took its toll and after the loss of important documents all officials were absolved, with the exception of one who was ordered to pay 50 Pesos.



Lima 1 *Real* coin (1570-1571). This coin shows the X assayer mark for Xinés (Ginés) Martínez on the obverse and the P for Peru on the reverse.

Despite having been cleared of the charges, at the end of 1570 Alonso de Rincón was removed from his post as assayer of the Lima Mint⁷ and on October 23, 1570, Francisco de Toledo, the new Peruvian Viceroy who had arrived in 1569, named Xinés (Ginés) Martínez as the new assayer. The ceremony of appointment of Xinés Martínez took place on November 20, 1570, and he immediately began minting coins copying the design of pillars

and waves as previously done by Rincón, but only until about March 1571.⁸ In 1570, Philip II had signed a decree on March 8 for the change of all dies. The new dies were to bear the Hapsburg Shield, but the notice of this change was not received in Lima until April 24, 1571. An official by the name of Ramírez de Cartagena, on this date informed the king that the change of design on the dies would take place as soon as the new ones arrived from Spain. On March 1, 1572, Viceroy Toledo informed the king of the arrival of the new dies and that these dies would be used. This letter from 1572 and coins with the new design, carrying the mark of Xinés Martínez, assayer mark X, confirm that these in fact were first used at Lima.⁹



Three coins from Lima can be seen above: a 1 *Real* (above left), a 2 *Reales* (above right) and a 1/4 *Real* (bottom left).

All three of these coins were minted using the design mandated by decree of March 8, 1570, and carried the assayer mark X, for Xinés (Ginés) Martínez. It is evident that these coins were minted in Lima during 1572, before the Lima mint stopped production. After the striking of these coins, Lima would not mint coins again until 1577 under a new assayer, Diego de la Torre (D).

Mint at La Plata

Toledo, taking advantage of the problems with the first officials of the Lima Mint and with the irregular arrival of silver, decided that the mint had to be relocated closer to the silver mines. The city of Lima opposed to no avail. In mid-1572, after meeting in Lima with some officials to discuss the founding of a new mint, the Viceroy traveled to the principal cities of Peru to try to decide on a new location.

Some had previously advocated for the relocation of the mint to take place at Arequipa and others Potosí, but at La Plata, a city of 700 houses and buildings in the Peruvian mountains where the *Audiencia de Charcas* had been located since 1559, Toledo met with important residents, members of the City Council and judges of the *Audiencia* and was persuaded to establish the new mint there, even after complaints had arisen that the cost of this endeavor would prove too high at this city.

In mid-1572, after Toledo's decision to establish a new mint at La Plata had been made, he ordered an official by the name of Altamirano to travel to Lima to convert the mint in that place into a jail or residence for judges and royal officials, and to send all the tools and machinery left there to La Plata.

Altamirano carried out the order to dismantle the Lima Mint, but could not take the dies and tools with him as the residents saw this as a violation of the decree of 1565 creating this mint and submitted a suit against the transfer of this equipment before the *Audiencia de Lima*. While the matter was in the courts, half of the dies and tools were sent to La Plata, as required under the new authorization of the Viceroy, but in January 27, 1573, a more formal complaint was submitted to the king.¹⁰ Viceroy Toledo also wrote the king to try to justify his conduct, but it seems that King Philip II took grace on Lima as no more equipment was sent. An official document confirms that by September 24, 1573, the dies and machinery were already in La Plata, but the assayer Rincón also tells us that because only half of the equipment had been brought, they had to borrow and make some of the indispensable items themselves as without them it would have been impossible to mint coins in that city.¹¹

By December 20, 1573, Toledo informed the king of the operation of the mint at La Plata and was able to send, enclosed with his letter, a sample of the first coin struck.¹² Although not much is known about the striking of these coins, we do know that assayer Alonso de Rincón, the same assayer known for the first coins of the Lima Mint, had previously complained to the king about his removal from the office of assayer, and after examination of his petition the king, by decree of March 3, 1573, requested that Rincón be reinstated, a task acknowledged by the Viceroy who called on Rincón again to be the assayer at the mint at La Plata.¹³ About the striking of the coins, the minter Miguel García tells us that he was ordered to strike 2,000 marks of silver and as soon as these coins were finished, he was ordered to go to Potosí in order to continue striking coins at the new mint the Viceroy had ordered to be founded there.¹⁴ Viceroy Toledo also pointed out that after the minting of these 2,000 marks, no silver was being submitted, hence one of his reasons for moving the mint to Potosí.¹⁵ The books from the Royal Treasury verify these accounts of the mintage at La Plata, recording that a total of 2,104 marks of silver, or the equivalent of 17,621 Pesos, were minted between December 1573 and January 1574.¹⁶

Calculating 67 *Reales* for each mark, 140,968 *Reales* would have been the entire output of the mint at La Plata. It is believed that most likely the entire output of these coins must have been in smaller denominations, as the circumstances under which this first issue was minted and the situation of the mint would have not justified the work and cost required for coins in all denominations.

Juan de Iturrieta, treasurer of the Potosí Mint in 1575, who was a witness of the coining at La Plata, tells us that the Viceroy ordered the striking of the coins to commence in the residence of the President of the *Audiencia*, but he also tells us that by then there were doubts as to whether it was wise or not to create a mint at La Plata, where the cost of making coins was so high. It is probably at this point that the Viceroy realized the mistake he had made in establishing a mint there. Four days after he informed the king of the beginning of operations at La Plata, on December 24, 1573, the officials from the *Audiencia de Charcas* also wrote the king, urging him not to move the mint to Potosí.¹⁷

Mint at Potosí

On February 28, 1574, the Viceroy notified Diego Bravo, Treasurer for the Royal Treasury of Potosí, that the establishment of the mint at Potosí had taken place following the king's orders to provide enough coinage for the commerce of these Kingdoms. But he concludes this correspondence by ordering the use of 2,000 marks from the Royal Treasury for the mint to produce coins, since silver was not being turned in by the inhabitants of the city for minting.¹⁸ With the complaint from La Plata still fresh in the Viceroy's mind, he needed the mint at Potosí to start producing coins quickly so that his policy regarding the new move could again be justified and samples be sent to the king.

In a letter dated March 3, 1574, the Viceroy officially informed the king that the new mint had been established in the Royal Treasury of Potosí, and that the production of coins had begun. Seventeen days later, on March 20, he writes the king again and reaffirms what he had informed earlier, stating that there had been many complications involved in making coins at La Plata and that the establishment of the mint at Potosí would be the solution to these problems.¹⁹

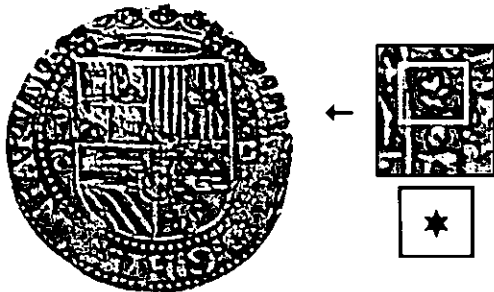
This shows that the protest from La Plata did not stop Viceroy Toledo from carrying out his own views to move this mint to Potosí and transferring all the tools, dies, and machinery from La Plata to its new location. There are no known records of the exact date for the establishment of the mint at Potosí, but the letter from the officials at La Plata of December 24, 1573, and the one from Viceroy Toledo dated February 28, 1574, place this event between these two dates.

During 1574 the mint only coined what was taken from the Royal Treasury, which was 8,000 marks of silver or about 68,000 Pesos' worth of coins, as the mint was new and the advantage of having legal coins was not yet realized by the inhabitants, especially taking into consideration that much of the *plata corriente* was considered to be of "bad" silver (impure silver) and there was a loss of one third to one half in value involved in turning in the *plata corriente* for coining. In February 1575, a formal investigation took place, as the Viceroy had previously published orders for the submission of silver, but these were not being carried out.

Not able to keep this mint running at full capacity without the cooperation of the town, the Viceroy then decided to undertake more drastic measures to ensure that silver would be supplied. On February 16, 1575, orders were given for the confiscation of ¼ of the silver submitted by the town's people to be taxed²⁰, but eventually this was not enough. So, on April 27, 1575, the Viceroy auctioned the office of provider of silver bars (*proveedor de pastas de plata*), the highest bidder being Juan del Castillo. This finally ensured a steady supply of silver to the mint and by the end of 1575 all four furnaces at the Potosí Mint were operating, permitting enough coins to be minted and driving much of the *plata corriente* out of the Province of Peru (and most likely into Panama, where devaluation and other penalties were not yet taking place).

What Became of the Mints of Lima & La Plata

Unlike the mint of Potosí, which continued its success, it would be another story for the mints of Lima and La Plata.



Left: Obverse of a Lima 8 Reales coin of assayer Diego de la Torre.

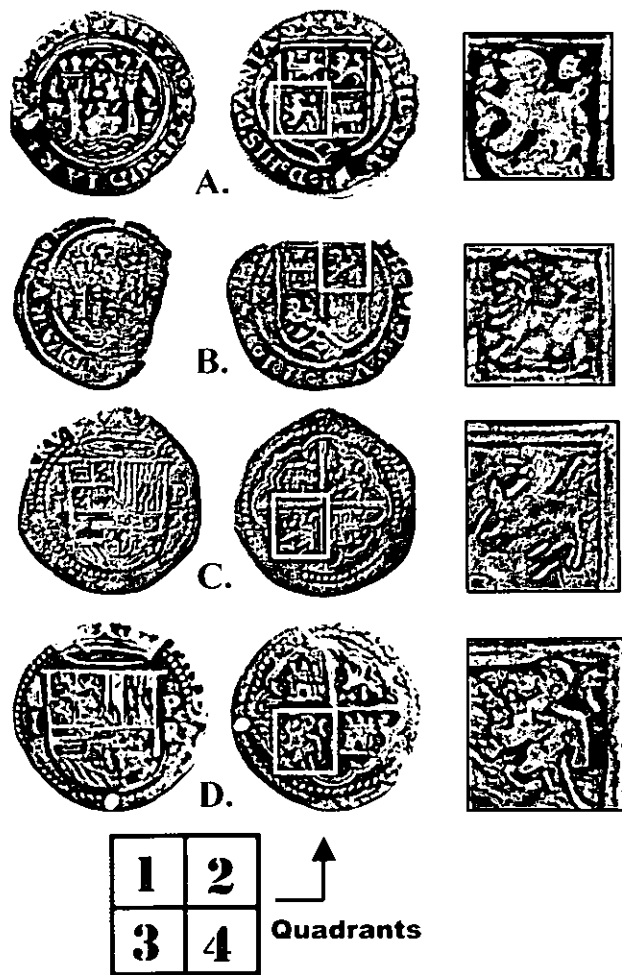
To the right of this coin, above the assayer mark (D), the star, used as supplementary mintmark to represent Lima, can be seen.

Lima reopened in 1577 and remained in continuous operation until 1587. Then operations resumed in 1592, but only for a short time. 1592 is recorded as the last year in which the payment of the royal minting tax was collected at this mint.²¹

The Lima Mint during this second period of 1577-1587 and 1592 added to its design a star (★), representing the star that the three wise men were said to have followed to find Jesus, as featured on the Coat of Arms of the city. With the coins of Potosí being minted steadily with the **P** mintmark, it seems that adding this supplementary mintmark was the only way that the officials from Lima could get recognition for their work, as we remember that they did not believe that the mint ever should have been taken away from this city, for this was the only place in the Province of Peru that the king had sent direct authorization to establish a mint. They fought hard enough to have it reopened in 1577 and wanted to make sure their new coins would be recognized.

As for La Plata, the mystery might never be completely solved. Half of the dies and tools used were the ones from Lima and the rest had to be made. But still only 2,104 marks of silver were coined by Alonso de Rincón at La Plata before the equipment was then sent on to Potosí where Alonso de Rincón, once again, continued his work, giving him the distinction of being the first assayer of all three Peruvian mints. When the mint at La Plata produced its coins, Lima had ceased and Potosí was not yet producing coins. Since no other mint was using the **P** mintmark, there was no need for La Plata to change this mintmark or even to add a supplementary mintmark, as done in Lima during the period that it minted coins concurrently with Potosí, to distinguish among different mints.

Knowing that Rincón was an assayer in both La Plata and Potosí was thought to make the coins from La Plata and the earliest from Potosí indistinguishable from each other. Recently, though, Mr. Barry Stallard has been studying the similarities between the dies and markings from the early shield-type coins of Lima and Potosí and is now making progress in determining which ones were from the equipment that was sent from Lima to La Plata. As the images below demonstrate, Mr. Stallard is credited with the first identification of a coin whose design contains a clear link to the mint of La Plata. But even with this progress it is sad to say that since some of the equipment transferred to La Plata was part of the new punches and markings that had arrived in Lima to begin striking the new shield-type coins, some La Plata coins would have the same appearance as those from the earliest issue of Potosí, hence a complete answer might never be found.



The four coins to the left are:

- A. Lima 1 *Real* coin of assayer R, pillars and waves design.
- B. Lima 1 *Real* coin of assayer X, pillars and waves design.
- C. Lima 1 *Real* coin of assayer X, shield design.
- D. Probably a La Plata 1 *Real* coin of assayer R, shield design.

In Peru, the “dog like” lion passant (lion with one front paw raised) was first used in Lima with the mintage of its earliest coinage; the pillars and waves design of assayers R and X (Coins A and B).

With the new punches and equipment sent to Lima for the implementation of the shield-type design mandated in 1570, it appears that the sculptor Juan Paulo Poxini prepared a new punch for lion, containing the image of a lion rampant (lion with the trunk and forepaws raised). Although Lima did manage to implement the new lion figure in 1572 when minting the first coins of the shield-type design there, some 1 *Reales* of assayer X now used an adaptation of the old lion figure, as seen on coin C.

Knowing that this lion passant was first used on the shield-type coins of Lima, assayer X, added to the lack of evidence of its use in Potosí, has led me to believe that tools for this lion passant must have been among those sent from Lima to La Plata, as part of the transfer of tools described in the documentary evidence. With La Plata’s mintage figures totaling 140,968 *Reales* worth of coins, it is likely that this particular punch would not have survived long enough for a subsequent transfer to the mint later established in Potosí, making the Peruvian coins of assayer R with this passant lion figure representative of coinage struck at La Plata.

Notice that the coin identified here as probably being a product of La Plata has the newer lion rampant design in quadrant 2, but still retained the lion passant, similar to that used in Lima, in quadrant 3 (coin D).

Source: The information and images presented here are part of an ongoing investigation by Mr. Barry W. Stallard. The credit for the discovery of a connection between the mint of La Plata and the coinage of Lima, assayer X, goes to him as well. He is the first researcher to document the existence of coins of assayer R with an undeniable link to Lima and therefore La Plata.

- (1) American Numismatic Society, Proceeding No. 5, Coinage of the Americas Conference, Editor W. L. Bischoff, *The Coinage of El Perú* (New York, NY, 1988), pp. 45-50 & pp. 52-63. The sections written respectively by E. Dargent Chamot, "The Early Lima Mint (1568-1572)," and A. J. Cunietti-Ferrando, "Documentary Evidence Regarding the La Plata Mint and the First Issues of Potosí," were invaluable for this chapter and discuss information on these three Peruvian mints in more detail.
- (2) AGI, Lima: 177, N. 54. This 21 page Memorial covers the issue of Gonzalo de Herrera's petition for approval to the office of assayer, from March 1566 to August 1568. One of the transcribed documents from the original of this Memorial reads: "Gonzalo de Herrera – dize que el Virrey y comisarios le nombraron por ensayador y fundidor de la casa de la moneda de aquella ciudad por dos mill y duzientos pesos que sirvio a su majestad Supplica se le pase el dicho nombramiento y se le haga merced del dicho oficio." Another transcribed portion of one of the other original documents reads: "Lima – 1566 – Mandamiento – titulo de ensayador de aquella casa de moneda a – Gonzalo de Herrera vezino de la ciudad de los rreyes En el piru y Vuestro ensayador y fundidor de aquella ciudad dize que el vuestro bisorrey y comisarios Le probeyeron y nombraron Al dicho oficio por concurrir En su persona Las calidades que son necesarias y porque sirvió a Vuestra alteza con dos myll y dozientos Pesos de plata Ensayada y marcada como consta por estos rrecaudos que presenta – suplica a Vuestra alteza Le hagamos merced de mandarle dar con firmacion y titulo del dicho oficio..." From the documents we can identify the name of the Viceroy in question as the Conde de Nieva, Diego López de Zúñiga y Velasco. Since Zúñiga y Velasco died February 19, 1564, it seems that Gonzalo de Herrera was attempting to use the records of his appointment to the office of assayer of the city as leverage to gain the office of assayer of the mint. His petition was eventually dismissed on August of 1568.
- (3) Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias, Vol. 2, *Cecas de Fundación Temprana*, directed by G. Anes y Alvarez de Castellón & G. Céspedes del Castillo (Madrid, 1997), p. 334. Section written by Eduardo Dargent Chamot, "La Casa de Moneda de Potosí." A portion of an original document from the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) identified as AGI, Lima: 92, numbered paragraph 9 (Letter from García de Castro to His Majesty – Dated October 1, 1566 at City of Kings), regarding the minting of coins reads: "no hay oficiales acá que la sepan hacer." Dargent Chamot also quotes a very important Royal Decree, dated March 3, 1573, which transcribed portion from the original reads: "por carta de Alondo Rincón nos ha sido hecha relación que al tiempo que por nuestro mandado hizo fundar en esas provincias casa de moneda el licenciado Castro, de nuestro Consejo de Indias y nuestro gobernador que fue de esa tierra, por ser persona práctica y de espiriencia en este ministerio, le mandó supiese y entendiese lo que era necesario para la fundación de la dicha casa y asentase e instruyese a los oficiales, y que en gratificación dello el dicho licenciado le dio el oficio de ensayador de la dicha casa y el de ensayador y fundidor de la ciudad de Zamora..."
- (4) American Numismatic Society (op. cit., n. 1) p. 58. Arnaldo Cunietti-Ferrando tells us in his documentary evidence of the mints of La Plata and Potosí that Alonso Rincón, also known as Alonso del Rincón and Alonso de Rincón, affirms in a disposition dated at Potosí in 1575 that his experience with mint production was due to him working in this field for "more than forty-five years in these dominions, and in New Spain and in the Kingdom of Spain." This information is cited as documented in AGI, Patronato: 190, fasc. 11v, 16.

AGI, Indiferente: 423, L. 19, F. 475v-477. Some documents from this trial conducted on Francisco del Rincón, Alonso del Rincón's brother, who previously served as the first assayer of the Mexico Mint, establish the Spanish city of origin for these two siblings and what was their father's name. This is very important information to help solve the mystery as to what Spanish mint Alonso de Rincón was referring to when saying that he had begun working in mint production in 1530, or 45 years prior to 1575. Some documents from AGI which we cite here call Francisco del Rincón a resident of the city of Mexico, but others, being more specific as to his place of origin, also state that he is from Toledo. Furthermore, it is within these documents that the name of his father is recorded as being Martín del Rincón.

AGI, Indiferente: 423, L. 19, F. 291. Knowing that Alonso del Rincón, son of Martín del Rincón, was originally a resident of the city of Toledo brings us to this document. It is on this document that we can at last verify Alonso de Rincón's statement regarding his prior work in a Spanish Peninsular mint and provide further evidence of his early involvement in mint production. This document, dated in Madrid, October 7, 1539, includes that Martín del Rincón was working in the office of diesinker at the mint of Toledo, with the assistance of his son Alonso del Rincón.

I also want to add that Alonso del Rincón's involvement in the mint of Mexico, as he indicated in 1575, has been fully documented in the past. We know that he received the office of diesinker for this mint on April 4, 1542, and that he arrived the same year in Mexico and remained there until 1545. It is also important to say

that in 1543 his brother, Francisco del Rincón, purchased the office of assayer of the mint. At this time Francisco del Rincón was in Spain and knowing that Mexican coins with the pillars and waves design were minted with the initial R during the time Francisco held the office indicates that it must have been his brother Alonso, acting as his lieutenant, who worked the office of assayer at the time these coins were minted.

- (5) Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias, Vol. 2, (op. cit., n. 3). Dargent Chamot quotes a very important Royal decree, dated March 3, 1573, which transcribed portion from the original reads: **"...en gratificación dello el dicho licenciado [el Gobernador Castro] le dio [a Alonso Rincón] el oficio de ensayador de la dicha casa [de moneda] y el de ensayador y fundidor de la ciudad de Zamora, y estando en quieta y pacífica posesión de los dichos oficios se los quitalles vos, y así estava desposeydo dellos."**
- (6) H. F. Burzio, *Diccionario de la Moneda Hispanoamericana* (Santiago de Chile, 1958), Vol. I, p. 282. Many acknowledge that the letter-P mintmark represents the Peruvian Viceroyalty, but this is yet to be confirmed. The document that gave this mintmark to Lima, the first of a series of mints in the Province of Peru, only says: a Latin P so as to know that it was made in Peru. It is more likely that the P mintmark represents the province itself. The transcript of the original appears as: **"...y pongase en la parte donde huuiere la diuisa de las columnas vna p latina para que se conozca que se hizo en el Peru."**
- (7) Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias, Vol. 2, (op. cit., n. 5).
- (8) American Numismatic Society (op. cit., n. 1) p. 48. Mr. Eduardo Dargent Chamot documented, from the Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Lima: 270, that on March 28, 1571, the spokesman for the *Audiencia de Lima*, Licenciado Vizcarra, notified the king that the work on the Lima Mint was coming to an end.
- (9) J. T. Medina, *Las Monedas Coloniales Hispano-Americanas* (Santiago de Chile, 1919), p. 156; American Numismatic Society (ibid. n. 8). The original of this letter is located in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Lima: 22.8. This letter from Viceroy Toledo to the king is dated at Cuzco on September 24, 1572, and provides documentary evidence that the coins we know today with the Hapsburg Shield and the mark of assayer X were in fact produced in a very small quantity at Lima during 1572. Medina quotes part of its content: **"se han quedado alli [en Lima] con la mitad de las herramientas y con ellas van haciendo algunas labores, que siendo tan de poco efecto el estar alli aquella Casa, que puedo certificar a V. M. que desde diez leguas de la ciudad de los Reyes acá, no sólo no corre moneda acuñada, pero ni aún un real no he visto, ni sé que le haya."**
- (10) American Numismatic Society (op. cit., n. 1) p. 53; Burzio (op. cit., n. 6), Vol. I, p. 283. A portion of the transcript from this letter from Lima, dated January 27, 1573, indicates: **"En esta ciudad mando vuestra magestad hazer una casa de moneda la qual se hizo y asiento y se nombraron oficiales della y vuestra magestad para su despacho y asiento enbio las ordenancas y cuños que eran necesarios...sin aber mostrado nuevo mandamiento para deshazerla y hacer otra en las charcas. [El Viceroy Toledo] Enbio a mandar que se deshiziese esta y se le enbiasen todos los cuños y erramientas / la ciudad y el fiscal ocurrieron a la audiencia y lo contradixeron. Enbiandosele la mitad de las erramientas [solamente]...[y] se suspendio asta consultar a vuestra magestad para que probeyese lo que mas fuese servido..."**
- (11) American Numismatic Society (op. cit. n. 1), pp. 53-54.
- (12) Burzio (op. cit., n. 6), Vol. I, p. 270. Burzio includes a transcribed portion of this letter from Viceroy Toledo, dated in La Plata, December 20, 1573, which says: **"La muestra de la primera moneda que se a labrado despues que la casa se fundo en esta provincia con la nueva estampa se embia con esta a vuestra magestad..."** It is important to mention that this letter's intention was to acknowledge to the king that the coins minted at La Plata carried the new design that had been mandated by decree of March 8, 1570, and not to say that a new mintmark was now being used, as some researchers had previously thought.
- (13) Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias, Vol. 2, (op. cit., n. 5). As indicated above, Dargent Chamot quotes a very important Royal Decree, dated March 3, 1573, which transcribed portion from the original reads: **"...en gratificación dello el dicho licenciado [Gobernador Castro] le dio [a Alonso Rincón] el oficio de ensayador de la dicha casa [de moneda] y el de ensayador y fundidor de la ciudad de Zamora, y estando en quieta y pacífica posesión de los dichos oficios se los quitalles vos, y así estava desposeydo dellos...Suplicándonos atento a ello y las justas razones que había habido para que se hiziese merced de los dichos oficios, se los mandásemos bolver en lo que hubiera rentado desde que se le quitaron, o como la mi merced fuese. E visto por los del nuestro Consejo de Indias**

porque yo quiero ser informado de lo que esto passa y qué officios y de qué qualidad son los susodichos, si los tenía y servía el dicho alonso Rincón, y de qué manera y de qué causa hubo para que vos se los quitádeses, vos mandamos que luego que esta os sea mostrada nos embiéys relación particular dello, dirigida al dicho nuestro Consejo para que en él visto, se provea lo que convenga.”

- (14) American Numismatic Society (op. cit., n. 1) p. 54.
- (15) Burzio (op. cit., n. 12). Transcribed portion of this letter from March 24, 1574: “por satisfacer a esta ciudad y audiencia y que entendiesen que no avia aqui caudal de plata para labrarse hize labrar dos mill marcos como escrivi y hacer rrequerimiento al cabildo para que diesen plata para labrar y como no se trajo un marco de plata para ello ni se pudiera conseguir aqui aver vuestra magestad los derechos del real de señoraje que ni en lima ni hasta aqui se avis pagado se asento en la villa ymperial de potosi...”
- (16) G. Céspedes del Castillo, *Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias*, Vol. 1, *Las Cecas Indianas en 1536-1825* (Madrid, 1996), p. 259.
- (17) E. Dargent, “Alonso Rincón Primer Ensayador del Perú,” *Gaceta Numismática de la Asociación Numismática Española* (Barcelona, Spain, December 1983), p. 53. The transcribed portion of this letter from December 24, 1573 reads: “a comenzado a labrar [moneda] en esta ciudad a donde a nuestro parecer es la parte más conveniente que ay...[pero] nos dizen la quiere [el Virrey] pasar a Potosi para hazer experiencia donde se lavrara mexor y se entiende que alli no podra durar a causa del mal temple y otras dificultades...”
- (18) *Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias*, Vol. 2, *Cecas de Fundación Temprana*, directed by G. Anes y Alvarez de Castellón & G. Céspedes del Castillo (Madrid, 1997), pp. 336-337. Section written by Eduardo Dargent Chamot, “La Casa de Moneda de Potosí”. American Numismatic Society (op. cit., n. 1) pp. 60-61. Both, Dargent Chamot and Cunietti-Ferrando document this letter whose origin is cited as located in the Archivo Nacional de Bolivia (ANB), Charcas, Minas: 133, fasc. 63v-64. A transcribed portion of this letter (translated to English by Cunietti-Ferrando) reads: “In fulfillment of what his majesty has commanded, ordered, and directed me to do: I have had established in that town the mint in order that in it be manufactured the quantity of coins necessary for the commerce of these dominions. Since traders and private personnel are not at present bringing in silver to be coined in said mint it is fitting that from the treasury of his majesty silver be taken to coin some silver marks so that everyone may become accustomed to said process.” To this he also adds that the Viceroy ordered the treasurer to convert 2,000 marks of silver from the Royal Treasury “in order that coin production may begin in said mint and so that its employees might not be idled.”
- (19) H. F. Burzio, *Diccionario de la Moneda Hispanoamericana* (Santiago de Chile, 1958), Vol. II, p. 222. Burzio transcribes a complete letter from Viceroy Toledo to the king, dated in La Plata on March 3, 1574, as follows: “En quanto a lo de la casa de la moneda tengo escrito a vuestra magestad largo en los despachos pasados que hera de tan grande ymportancia para todo este rreyno subilla aca que ni la plata que no hera de azogue se podia tomar a baluar ni subir a su justo valor segun andava de baxa ni los quintos de vuestra magestad se podian cobrar de toda la corriente en tanto que vuestra real hazienda perdía ni se podian quitar tantos embustes y engaños como cada día se hacian en andar apreciando y avaluando la corriente a tantos por ziento para ajustalla al ensayado ni la rrepublica se prevalecia de tantos rremedios como se consiguen con la moneda por satisfacer a esta ciudad y audiencia y que entendiesen que no avia aqui caudal de plata para labrarse hize labrar dos mill marcos como escrivi y hazer rrequerimientos al cabildo para que diesen plata para labrar y como no se trujo un marco de plata para ello ni se pudiera conseguir aqui aver vuestra magestad los derechos del rreal de señoraje que ni en lima ni hasta aqui se avia pagado se asento en la villa ymperial de potosi en las cassas rreales como escribi que se aria donde se labra y esta labrando con las comodidades y utiles que vuestra magestad mandara ver por la rrazon que con esta sera y segun y como se contiene en las hordenanzas rreales que estan ympresas.”

Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias (ibid, n. 18) pp. 335-336. Dargent Chamot indicates the doumentary source of this letter as AGI, Lima: 29 (Carta del Virrey Toledo al Rey, Lima, 20 de marzo de 1574). A transcribed portion of the original reaffirms the letter from March 3, 1574 and once again reads: “se ascentó en la Villa Ymperial de Potosi, en las casas reales, como escribí que se haria, donde se labra y está labrando [la moneda].”

- (20) Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias (ibid, n. 19) p. 337. Dargent Chamot indicates the documentary source of this document as Archivo Nacional de Bolivia, Sucre, Audiencia de Charcas, Minas, 133, n. 4 (Orders from the Viceroy to the treasurer of the mint, Juan [Joan] de Iturrieta, February 16, 1575). The transcribed portion of the original reads: **"pongase en rieles toda la plata que los oficiales reales entreguen en esta Casa de Moneda procedentes de la cuarta parte de todas las barras y plata de azogue que metieron a quintar las personas particulares."**
- (21) American Numismatic Society (op. cit. n. 1) p. 49; Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias, Vol. 2, *Cecas de Fundación Temprana*, directed by G. Anes y Alvarez de Castellón & G. Céspedes del Castillo (Madrid, 1997), pp. 273-174. Section written by Eduardo Dargent Chamot, "La Casa de Moneda de Lima." It is important to mention that many authors have erroneously documented a production of 10,912 marks of silver during 1588, a year in which there was no mint production in Lima. Mr. Eduardo Dargent Chamot documents in much detail the complete period of inactivity between 1588 and 1591 and clarifies what had previously been published by J. J. TePaske and H. S. Klein in their book *The Royal Treasuries of the Spanish Empire in America* (Durham, N.C., 1982), that the above figure is in fact the one accepted for the Lima Mint, as taken from the Archive of the Indies (AGI), during 1592.

